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MELCOMBE LODGE ;

OR,

*Traits of Family Pride!*

A NOVEL,

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

---

BY A LADY.

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“ The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,  
“ Whilst the poor grasshopper must chirp below :  
“ Like him, unnotic’d, I, and such as I,  
“ Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly.”

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VOL. III.

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LYNN :

*Printed by and for W. Whittingham,*

AND PUBLISHED BY BALDWIN, CRADOCK,

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## *Melcombe Lodge.*

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### CHAPTER I

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SOPHIA was met by Mrs. Singleton on her way to her apartment, who, saying she wished much to speak to her, accompanied her thither.

“ Lord d’Arcy,” she began, “ has been here during your absence, and has commissioned me to exert my influence over my friend, in obtaining for him that audience

this evening, she had promised to grant him in the morning."

"Oh ! no, no, I cannot consent to see him," exclaimed the agitated Sophia; "how could you, my dear Charlotte, have the cruelty to undertake the office of Ambassadors on such an occasion."

"I have merely informed you of the commission I was charged with," returned Mrs. Singleton; "the influence you appear so apprehensive of, has not yet been exerted. Why then, my dear Sophia, accuse me of cruelty?"

"Forgive me, Charlotte, but were you the least aware of the present state of my mind, you would not only pardon, but pity the irritability of it."

"My dear Sophia," cried Mrs. Singleton, affectionately embracing her, "I have

for some time suspected you were far from happy; and am not now to learn from what cause the alteration in your spirits has proceeded. Lord d'Arcy's mortification was so apparent on finding you had left the house to avoid receiving him, that I no longer hesitated to believe the conjectures I had formed on the subject of his attachment to you, were correct."

"When a little recovered from his consternation, he apologised to me for his intrusion; and perceiving from my countenance how sincerely I sympathised in his evident distress, (perhaps thinking it not improbable I had heard from others the reason of it,) he imparted to me the rise and progress of his attachment to my friend; and the barrier, which the illiberal prejudices of the Earl had raised to impede his happiness."

“ To add to his misery, he had heard it confidently reported that you, my dear Sophia, had accepted Lord Deresford. This report, he added, from something that passed last night, he had then reason to believe was erroneous; but your leaving Lady D—’s so abruptly, and breaking your engagement this morning, made him again apprehensive it was not without foundation.”

“ I soon however set his mind at ease on that subject, and at length promised to prevail upon you to admit him this evening, and allow him to plead his cause once again.”

Mrs. Singleton, perceiving Sophia was now on the point of interrupting her, entreated to be heard a few minutes longer in silence, and immediately proceeded.

“ Are you not, my dear friend, rendering yourself and the man whom you cannot

deny feeling a little attached to miserable, merely to indulge the absurd prejudices of of an arrogant Peer, whose only objection to his son's union with you, is, your father being unfortunately the younger instead of the elder branch of the house of Ormondsty. Had it been the reverse, we should then have seen the proud Norman acting a very different part, and the first to encourage his son to lay siege to a daughter of that noble house. Lord d'Arcy, who is in every respect the opposite of his father, loves you with the most disinterested affection ; you are not, as I said before, indifferent to him ; yet from a false pride you would banish him from his friends and country, rather than consent to become his wife."

"Is it possible," cried Sophia, in the most visible agitation, "that Lord d'Arcy can have commissioned you to insult me, by proposing a private marriage ?"

“To insult you, my dear Sophia, could be neither his intention nor mine,” returned her friend, considerably alarmed at the effect her words had produced. “What I have been urging did not upon my word proceed from him; I was only trying to impress my own convictions upon you. It is I, believe, Lord d’Arcy’s intention to leave England immediately, which I think cannot be permitted by you, without feeling some little compunctions of conscience on the occasion.”

“If you do not intend to distract me quite,” said Sophia, even more agitated than before; “desist my friend, I beseech you, nor continue to urge a topic, I must not, dare not attend to.”

Sophia then, as well as her emotion allowed, gave Mrs. Singleton a succinct account of every thing that had passed before and since Lord d’Arcy’s unsuccessful applica-

tion to the Earl, and the promise she had given to her parents, never again to attend to Lord d'Arcy on the prohibited subject, whilst Lord Montreuil's prejudices remained in force : and there appeared so little prospect of their ever being lessened, that she thought the wisest course for her to pursue, was to avoid the possibility of meeting his son at present.

“ Must I then tell Lord d'Arcy, you will not grant his petition for seeing you only five minutes ? ” enquired Mrs. Singleton, angry with Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville, for having as she believed extorted this promise from their daughter.

“ Indeed you must; he can have nothing to urge it will be possible for me to attend to; and as we should meet only to part directly, surely it is better not to meet at all.”

“ I will not press you to act contrary to

your own conviction of what is right, Sophia," said Mrs. Singleton, " but I will see Lord d'Arcy in the evening as I promised, and endeavour in some manner to reconcile him to your decree.. Poor man, he has my sincerest sympathy."

" And have you Charlotte, none to spare for me ? " said Sophia reproachfully.

" Scarcely any I confess," replied Mrs. Singleton, in a half peevish tone, as she left her friend's apartment ; from whence she directed her steps to the library, where she found, as she had expected, her husband, to whom she related what had been passing.

Major Singleton was concerned to find so many obstacles had arisen to impede the happiness of those who were so much regarded by him, but unlike his wife, he applauded Sophia's firmness in denying Lord

d'Arcy an audience: circumstanced as they both were at that time, he thought it far better they should not meet.

Charlotte for the first time felt disposed to quarrel with her husband, but before she left him, the latter had made her a thorough convert to his opinion,—that her friend had acted with the strictest propriety in refusing to comply with his Lordship's desire of an interview.

Whilst Mrs. Singleton and Sophia were sitting in the drawing-room, some little time after this, Lady Caroline Selbourne's name was announced, and before it was possible for Sophia, who much wished it, to make her escape, her Ladyship entered.

Lady Caroline's spirits this morning were if possible more exuberant, than on

the preceding evening. She congratulated Sophia upon her recovery from her indisposition, and after rallying her upon its having seized her so suddenly, she mentioned Lord d'Arcy's consternation at hearing of her abrupt retreat. "I saw no more of him," she continued, "and therefore concluded he had followed you to Seymour-street. Soon after the Earl advanced towards me, and instantly enquired, whether my Ladyship knew what had become of his son. I had half a mind to tell him, he was with you ; but do not look so alarmed," she continued, directing an arch glance at Sophia, "I did not breathe your name ; but merely answered his high mightiness, I was perfectly ignorant of Lord d'Arcy's movements. How heartily I hate this proud Norman. He would remind me of madame d'Arblay's old Delville, only that he is a thousand times more disagreeable for d'Arcy castle is Delville ditto over again ; except being a still more ancient structure

than that is represented to us ; and the owner of the former may possibly possess more of the gifts of fortune to keep it in more excellent repair. I wish, my dear Miss De Clairville, you could see the earl parading one of the galleries in d'Arcy castle, where hangs the honored pair, (at least so he would persuade us) who presented his hundredth and odd grand father with the castle and demesnes around."

"I hope your Ladyship," said Charlotte smiling, "has also found a resemblance in Lord d'Arcy to young Delville."

"Indeed I cannot pay my favourite Mortimer so bad a compliment," returned Lady Caroline. He is not half spirited enough here, do you think he is, Miss De Clairville? "

"I believe not; though I am no judge," replied Sophia, colouring highly.

“ Yet I suspect you are a better judge on the subject than your diffidence will allow you to acknowledge,” returned her Ladyship laughing. “ But what think you of the match likely to take place between the daughter of the house of Montreuil, and the Marquis of Ormondsty ? ”

Sophia said that nothing would give her greater pleasure, than claiming a relationship with Lady Grace, though ever so distant.

“ It will be entirely your own fault,” rejoined Lady Caroline, “ if you do not call your future cousin, sister. Will it not Mrs. Singleton. ? ”

Charlotte laughing said, “ this was a question she could not possibly answer, as she was not in her friend’s confidence.”

Sophia endeavoured to join in the laugh,

but finding it impossible, she attempted as she had often before done, to turn the conversation.

The entrance of Mr. Monthermer, assisted her design. He and Lady Caroline never met without sparring; and this morning they played upon each other more than usual. Mrs. Singleton, who had never till now seen them together, was not a little entertained at witnessing this war of words. Mr. Monthermer had evidently the advantage over his fair antagonist, who finding herself in danger of being forced off the field, was glad to call for quarter, which was at length granted; when, after sitting a few minutes longer, Lady Caroline rose, and telling Sophia she hoped to see her in the course of the summer, as it was probable they should pay a visit to the Deresfords, she gave her hand to the conqueror to lead her to her carriage. Mr. Monthermer merely returned to bid farewell to So-

phia, and to wish her a safe and pleasant journey, ere he also made his parting bow.

The friends then separated to prepare for dinner, at which the family alone assembled. Mr. Singleton and his son expressed their regret at losing Sophia on the morrow: Charlotte appeared much dispirited, and Sophia scarcely spoke at all. Eliza, after they returned to the drawing-room, mentioned the interesting female they had seen in Kensington gardens, and how much her companion's curiosity had been excited to learn who she was. Her sister finding Sophia was really anxious to discover her name, promised she would take an opportunity of questioning some one in the gardens on the subject, as she intended visiting them very often that season. As soon as she could speak to her friend without witnesses, Mrs. Singleton advised her taking her tea with Lady Singleton. "She

will be much flattered by such an attention," she proceeded, " and Lord d'Arcy finding you are resolutely bent upon not seeing him, when he hears you have again left the house to avoid him, will not have any inducement to remain here long, but leave a free passage for your return."

Sophia readily consented to this arrangement, and accompanied by Eliza, (whom her sister had persuaded to take this opportunity of paying her respects to the dowager,) was at an early hour conveyed to Lady Singleton's, who appeared highly flattered by the compliment; aware it was the last evening of Sophia's being in London. The carriage came for them between nine and ten, as had been before agreed upon. Eliza hoping to find Colonel Marsden there, immediately on her return to Seymour-street, hurried to the drawing-room; but Sophia not daring to follow her companion, fearful Lord d'Arcy might

not yet have left the house, directed her steps to the library. But what was her dismay, on opening the door of that apartment, to find the person she had hoped to avoid, seated at a table, and engaged in writing. Her first wish was to escape unseen; but Lord d'Arcy had already perceived her, and flying towards her, seized her hand, and entreated her not to leave him, till she had heard all he had to say. Sophia, vainly endeavouring to disengage her hand, said, it was impossible for her to remain a single instant, and scarcely knowing what she did, called him cruel for wishing to detain her.

“Can this be the Sophia,” cried Lord d'Arcy with emotion, “who at Melcombe was all sweetness, all gentleness; nay whom only a few hours since, I found the same attractive being I had seen her there!”

“And can this be the Lord d'Arcy,” she

returned, looking reproachfully at him, "whom once I thought so highly of, that is now persuading me to continue with him, when aware he can have nothing to urge that Sophia De Clairville ought to hear?" and forcibly drawing her hand from his grasp, she would have quitted the room; but Lord d'Arcy followed her, again entreated to be heard, if but for a moment. Sophia stopped, but without closing the door, which she still continued to hold in her hand, desired him to be quick, as she was in haste. Lord d'Arcy now feeling very angry, begged if that was the case, he might not detain her; and turning abruptly away, left her at liberty to depart.

It was now her turn to entreat to be heard. The gentleness of her accents, as she made this request, instantaneously banished his Lordship's displeasure; and again taking her hand, which she no longer attempted to withdraw, he led her to a seat

and placing himself beside her, waited with some little anxiety to hear what she had to say ; but perceiving she continued silent, he told her that finding her determination of not seeing him was not to be shaken, he had requested Mrs. Singleton to be the bearer of a letter from him to her friend, which he entreated permission to write before he left the house : that at first, she had hesitated, but at length yielded to his solicitations, and had put him in possession of the library, where she left him to compose his letter. “Fully expecting, I make no doubt,” continued Lord d’Arcy smiling, “it would be finished, and the writer gone, long before you returned from your visit. But for some time after my fair hostess left me, I was incapable of writing, and had scarcely composed my thoughts sufficiently for this purpose, when you entered : and now forgive me, if I express the hope you will bear the purport of what I was proceeding to put on paper.”

Sophia entreated him to remember that her father had his determination never to encourage an attachment between any man and his daughters, unsanctioned by the family of the former. "You must be aware my Lord," she proceeded, "the Earl's consent is yet wanting to sanction what you profess to feel for me; can I then consistently with the duty I owe to my father, or the respect I feel due to myself, attend to you a moment on a subject which he disapproves. You are 'not now to learn,'" she continued, a bright blush suffusing her countenance, "that had your father been less inexorable, you would have met with little opposition to your wishes, from my family; but as he is, forgive my saying, the less we meet at present, the better for us both. If it will give you any consolation to know it," she again proceeded after a pause, in which Lord d'Arcy had risen in the greatest agitation and was pacing the apartment with rapid strides, "be

assured I am not happier than yourself. Here poor Sophia's voice faltered, and unable any longer to control her feelings, she hid her face on the back of her chair, and sobbed aloud.

Lord d'Arcy instantly flew to her, and drawing her gently towards him, implored her to bless him once more with the assurance he had not yet become indifferent to her.

Quite overcome by the exertions she had made in this trying interview, Sophia continued to weep some time in silence on the shoulder of Lord d'Arcy; recovering at length to a sense of the impropriety of her situation, she endeavoured by making a strong effort to recover some composure, and to leave the library: but her companion observing her intention, with a gentle violence prevented her design, and again pressed her to confirm his hopes of his still having a place in her affections.

“ This is not the first time; my Lord, you have been the witness of my folly,” said Sophia, as she endeavoured to hide her blushing face from his ardent gaze, “ but it will I trust be the last.”

“ What folly is this you allude to ?” he returned. “ I have discovered nothing but what is sweet and attractive in you, speak then dearest Sophia ; assure me I am not indifferent to you; and with this conviction impressed on my mind, I think,” he added smiling, “ were I doomed to wait for you as many years as Shalum is said to have done for his fair mistress, I could rest satisfied.”

Lord d'Arcy continued to plead his cause so successfully, that Sophia was not only induced to confess her regard for him had not been weakened by absense, but at length to promise, she would consider herself engaged to him for the next twelve months,

if at the expiration of that time, Lord d'Arcy would promise to resign her for ever, if his father or hers, still continued inexorable to their wishes.

Sophia was at length under the necessity of urging his departure, fearing every moment Major Singleton or Eliza might enter the apartment. The request he had made of her corresponding with him in their absence, she immediately put a negative upon; and soon himself convinced of the impropriety of it, he did not continue to urge the subject.

Lord d'Arcy still continued to linger, unable to assume courage to pronounce that terrible word *farewell*! At length, on Sophia's earnestly beseeching him to leave her, expecting every moment to hear the Major's step approaching the library, he with a strong effort prepared to obey. For an instant he pressed his beloved Sophia to his throbbing heart, then not daring to

snatch another glance, he precipitately left the room, and the next minute the house, without again returning to Mrs. Singleton.

Mrs. Singleton, hearing the door close upon him, proceeded directly to the library, where she found her friend in an agony of tears.

Eliza had mentioned to her sister, Sophia's having proceeded thither on their return from Lady Singleton's, which intelligence had somewhat disconcerted Charlotte, who not having heard Lord d'Arcy leave it, had reason to suppose him still there. Nothing, but the fear of Eliza's following her thither, prevented the former from joining her friend, who would naturally she thought be induced to believe she had designedly left her in ignorance of his Lordship's being there, in order to betray her into a meeting with him. By affecting

to be employed in seeking for a book upon the shelves, Mrs. Singleton gave Sophia time to recover herself sufficiently to be able to relate the substance of the conversation that had just passed between Lord d'Arcy and herself. Charlotte, finding he had exonerated her from any premeditated scheme of bringing them together, confessed herself not very sorry to find they had met ; and now endeavoured to buoy Sophia up with hopes of Lord Montreuil's being brought to reason long before the expiration of a twelvemonth ; but finding she could not succeed in raising the spirits of her friend, she desisted from the attempt ; and promising to make her excuses for not appearing at supper, advised her retiring to bed, which Sophia consenting to do, she affectionately embraced her, and returned to the drawing-room, where she found Colonel Marsden with her husband and father just arrived before. As an excuse for her friend's not joining the party, she

mentioned the fatiguing journey she had to undertake the next day, it being the wish of Colonel Howard to reach — the first evening, that they might arrive at Melcombe by the dinner hour the following day.

## CHAP. II.



Mrs. Singleton rose before her usual hour the next morning, that she might have an hour's uninterrupted conversation with her friend before breakfast.

Sophia confessed to her, that had Lord d'Arcy named ten years instead of one, she should not for a moment have hesitated to comply with his request, for if the Earl, as she foresaw would be the case, could not be induced to shake off his prejudices, she had no other wish than to supply the

loss of her sisters, who would very soon be claimed by their affianced Lords, to her parents.

Charlotte laughed exceedingly at the idea of her friend's serious intention of continuing through life in single blessedness; and began summing up the names of those men who she knew would be most desirous of inducing her to change her determination. "Poor Marsden," she proceeded, "has, I fear, little chance of doing this; but Monthermur's rhetoric I think cannot fail of producing the desired effect." Upon Sophia's shaking her head she continued, "well then, Sir Harry Evelin, or the tender Egerton who declares to every one he cannot live without you. Still silent? What say you then to my worthy father-in-law? He is, you know, decidedly your slave. Are there no hopes of his making you break through this cruel resolution?"

“ I can assure my dear teasing Charlotte,” returned Sophia, “ if I am ever induced to change the name of De Clairville, it will be for that of your worthy parent’s ; and for his alone.”

“ Bravo ! my spirited fair one ;” returned her friend much amused. “ Mortimer shall convey to his father the happiness that one day awaits him ; perhaps,” she added a little archly, “ before the next twelve moons have revolved round this earth of ours. Come, sigh not so piteously, you shall now have your breakfast, and when we next meet, I hope to see those dimpled smiles returned, that were so highly becoming to you.”

Colonel Howard was awaiting their appearance with great impatience. He scarcely allowed Sophia to drink her coffee before he enquired if she were ready to commence their journey. Feeling little

inclination for eating any thing, Sophia would have answered him in the affirmative; but Charlotte insisted she should not stir, till she had taken some breakfast; then hearing the luggage was fastened on the carriage, and every thing ready, she tenderly embraced her friend, and reluctantly permitted the Major to lead her to it.

Mr. Singleton insisted to be allowed to salute the cheek of Sophia, desired her to be a good girl, and recover her fine bloom before he next visited —shire, which the air of London had deprived her of.

His son begged she would allow them to hear from her often; and then observing Colonel Howard's impatience to be off, he suffered the carriage to proceed.

Sophia for some time did not notice the unusual taciturnity of her companion, so wholly were her thoughts engrossed by an-

other object ; but when she did remark it, believing it had been occasioned by her evident disinclination to converse, she turned towards him to offer some apology for her silence ; when she observed him leaning back in the carriage with his arms folded, and saw in his countenance an expression of the greatest uneasiness.

“ What has happened to you my dear Alfred,” she enquired, as the apprehension crossed her mind he had heard some bad news of the family.” Are all well at Melcombe ? ”

“ All I trust,” he replied.

“ Then from what cause proceeds this visible uneasiness, which I trace in your countenance, your manner, and even your voice ? ”

“ Sophia,” cried Colonel Howard as he

drew his hat more over his face, “ I have this morning heard my regiment is under orders for embarking almost immediately, for the East Indias.”

“ Gracious heaven ! is it possible ! ” she returned much agitated; “ what will become of my poor Harriet ? ”

“ You can give me little hope, I perceive,” said Colonel Howard mournfully, “ of your father or mother consenting to her becoming the partner of my voyage. Oh why;” he continued, “ was I so determinately bent upon withstanding my brother’s solicitations to leave the army, when I might have done so with honor. But that time is passed, and the present is too limited for my entertaining a hope of procuring an exchange with another officer, who, not having the same tie to detain him in this country that I have, might possibly have been happy in the opportunity afforded him of visiting another.”

“Do not give way to this despondence my dear Alfred,” said Sophia. “Harriet may yet consent to become yours before you leave England.”

“Oh no!” he returned, “I cannot expect your sister to quit her family and country, to follow me to distant climes. I will therefore prepare her for this parting, and then hasten back to Town, to make preparations for my long, long banishment.”

Sophia had nothing further to offer in consolation, yet judging of her sister by herself she felt almost persuaded Harriet would never allow Colonel Howard to go to India unaccompanied by her.

In almost total silence, which neither felt disposed to interrupt, the first day's journey was passed: nor did the following morning find the travellers more inclined

to converse, as the nearer he approached the residence of her from whom he was about to separate perhaps for ever. Colonel Howard's dejection became each succeeding moment more apparent : and his companion, feeling herself unable to quiet his apprehensions, desisted at length from the attempt.

The Park belonging to Melcombe at length appeared in sight. Sophia's heart bounded with delight, when she recognised the honest face of the old servant who came forward to admit the carriage within its gates. As it drove round the sweep to the house, she caught a glance of her mother and sisters at the window of the breakfast-room, and no longer able to retain her seat she attempted to open the door of the vehicle, and, had not Colonel Howard prevented her design, would have run a considerable risk of breaking her neck in springing

from it before it stopped. Sophia waited not, when it did, for her companion's assistance ; but flying past the old butler, who advanced to open the door of the carriage, she darted up the steps of the Portico, and was the next minute in the embraces of her mother and sisters, who met her in the hall.

Sophia enquired for her father and brother, and heard that, not expecting her so soon, they had gone out on horseback.

Colonel Howard now coming forward was welcomed with the sincerest pleasure by all. Harriet soon discovered that something was wrong, and seized the earliest opportunity to enquire what it was.

The first hint he gave of his being obliged to leave her struck a chill to her heart ; but when she further learned his destination was the East Indies, and that he would

probably be absent many years, her complexion changed to the hue of death, and had not Colonel Howard caught her in his arms, she would have fallen insensible to the floor. A few moments only was Harriet in this situation ; and trying to shake off the langour that still oppressed her, she endeavoured to resume the subject that had given her nerves so severe a shock. Finding Alfred could not in honor throw up his commission, and that the time was far too limited for his hoping to obtain an exchange, she resolved upon accompanying him abroad ; and having once made up her mind upon the subject, Harriet did not allow her lover to remain in ignorance of it ; and blushing as she held out her hand to him, she mentioned her resolution of being the partner of his voyage, if he felt disposed to be encumbered with her.

The extacies that followed this declaration it is unnecessary to describe.

Colonel Howard besought his beloved Harriet to name an early day for their union, and she promised after preparing her family for this separation, to make no unnecessary delay : and soon leaving him, she hastened to seek her father for this purpose.

Mr. De Clairville had heard from Sophia the destination of Colonel Howard's regiment ; and fully persuaded his daughter would never suffer this to be an impediment to their union, he had been endeavouring to prepare his wife for the probable determination of their child, to accompany the Colonel to India as his wife.

Harriet therefore found her task less difficult than she had expected. Mr. De Clairville could not blame his daughter for acting as she intended doing ; and whilst his heart bled at the thoughts of parting with her for so long a period, he would

not allow her to know how much he suffered ; but rather endeavoured to keep up her spirits as the time approached when she was to part from her family, which she had never before left but for Woodley, her second home, or to pay her annual visit to Glenmore, whither she had been generally accompanied by one or other of her sisters.

For some time Mrs. De Clairville could not be induced to hear of the necessity of her daughter's accompanying Alfred Howard abroad, even if she married him, but finding her husband apparently reconciled to parting with his child, she tried to persuade herself she felt no longer any repugnance to the plan, though the tears she could not always hide too plainly evinced she had not taught her heart that resignation she wished her family to believe she had attained.

The preparations for Harriet's marriage were soon completed ; and the following week saw her the wife of Colonel Howard, who soon after the ceremony, was obliged to hasten with his bride to Portsmouth, as the convoy only waited for a favourable wind to waft them from the British shores.

## CHAP. III.



The family at Melcombe had scarcely recovered their parting with one so deservedly dear to them as Harriet was to all, when they were alarmed by Edward's being suddenly attacked with a violent fever, and in a short time few hopes were entertained of his recovery by his medical attendants.

Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville, watched with the most anxious solicitude the bed of their son. Sophia and Ellen earnestly en-

treated to be allowed their share in nursing the beloved invalid ; but apprehensive of the disorder proving infectious, their mother begged them for her sake not to enter the apartment of their brother, till the Physician could assure them there was no longer any danger to be apprehended from their visiting it.

Fondly attached as they were both to Edward, this prohibition was a severe trial to the sisters. Unable to settle in their accustomed vocations, they passed the chief part of their time in wandering about the house, generally in the vicinity of that room they were interdicted from entering.

Charles Warburton passed the greater part of his time at Melcombe. His visits were equally acceptable to both the sisters, as in him Sophia found a sympathising auditor, who was never tired of hearing her dwell upon the virtues of that friend, whose

recovery there every hour appeared less hopes of.

Young Warburton's attentions were directed equally to every member of this distressed family, and sometimes he would prevail upon Mr. De Clairville to permit him to occupy his station in the sick room, whilst for a short time he visited his daughters.

The good effect resulting from religious principles in the hour of calamity was never more apparent than in this afflicted family. To that Being who hath invited all to fly to him in their distress they now turned for consolation, imploring him to teach them acquiescence in his appointments, and to bow with filial resignation to his will, whatever that will might be.

In his delirium Edward was often heard to repeat the name of Emily, whom some-

times he would reproach as being the cause of his sufferings ; but as he spoke very indistinctly, it was seldom those around him could distinguish what he said. Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville however heard enough to convince them, their son's illness was not alone to be attributed to sitting in damp clothes, which he had when first attacked acknowledged to have done, after being exposed to a violent shower.

For several days Edward continued in the greatest danger, when after a night passed in more than usual restlessness, which the nurses pronounced to be that of death, he fell into a sleep so profound, it was with difficulty his respiration could be heard. The medical man, arriving soon after, declared this the crisis of the disorder, and gave directions for the most perfect quiet to be observed through the house. This sleep continued uninterrupted for several hours; during which time the foot-

steps of the servants were scarcely heard as they went about their occupations, so much had their young master's uniform kind treatment endeared him to the hearts of all.

Late in the afternoon this long sleep terminated, and Edward awoke perfectly sensible, though reduced in strength to that of an infant.

Dr. N— now pronounced his patient out of danger, and comforted the late afflicted but now happy family with the assurance, a little time and care were alone wanted to restore him to his former health.

Grateful to that Power, who had changed the house of mourning into one of joy, Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville continued those attentions to their son, which had already been instrumental to his recovery, and the happy effects of their care became

each day more apparent. When able to leave his apartment Edward was removed into his mother's dressing room, where his sisters and friend were permitted to see him. Sophia forgetting her own unhappiness in her joy at her beloved brother being thus snatched from the gates of death, endeavoured all in her power to amuse the invalid, by relating many anecdotes she had heard in the fashionable world, during her visit in London, but fearing the name of Colonel Marsden might produce unpleasant recollections in the mind of her brother, if as she could not help suspecting, the niece of Mr. Gressington was in some measure the occasion of his late illness, she carefully avoided mentioning the Colonel's before him.

On repairing one morning to his apartment Sophia found him amusing himself with looking over the contents of her portfolio, which she had accidentally left there

the night before. After the first salutations had passed, Edward complimented his sister on the improvement in her style of drawing, since he had last seen any of her productions. "Here is a figure," he proceeded, "which for eloquence and correctness of design not even — could have excelled."

Sophia, glancing her eyes over the drawing, saw it was an Hebe, which Lord d'Arcy had sketched one morning whilst sitting with herself and sisters in their *sanctum*, and with which she had been so much charmed, that she had expressed to have it in her possession, and now, colouring highly, she told her brother the figure he had been so much admiring was the production of a friend's pencil, from whom she had borrowed it with the intention of copying it.

"And have you succeeded in your attempt?" he enquired.

“ By no means. But if you are desirous of seeing a specimen of a designing, look at this, it was taken from memory and intended to represent the figure of the most interesting female I ever remember to have seen.

Edward reached out his hand for the drawing; but had scarcely cast his eyes upon it, before the little colour he had left faded on his cheeks, as uttering a faint exclamation he sank on the sofa nearly insensible.

“ Edward ! my dearest brother !” cried Sophia much alarmed, as she hastened to assist him, “ what can have occasioned this violent agitation ? surely not the little sketch I this moment showed you.”

“ It too certainly was that drawing,” he returned, as soon as he was able to speak, “ which has thus unmanned me. Tell

me Sophia where you became acquainted with her, whom it was intended to represent?"

Sophia mentioned her visit to Kensington gardens the morning before she left Town, where she had met the interesting stranger, who she no longer doubted was the neice of Mr. Gressington, nor was she long left by her brother in ignorance of the name of the young and beautiful invalid, as after a pause of a few minutes, in which he appeared making a strong effort to recover from the violent emotion the sight of the drawing had occasioned him, he said, "You my dear Sophia were little aware when you put your beautiful sketch into my hands I should trace in it the resemblance of that patient sufferer, Maria Buckby, who but for me might at this time have been looking as she did when I first saw her at her uncle's. And do you indeed believe she has so short a time to live?" "You

did not my dear brother hear me express any fears for the life of the young lady I met in Kensington Gardens," said Sophia, now highly alarmed for the consequences of her imprudence.

"Yet this drawing convinces me you saw every reason to apprehend she was fast hastening to her grave," he exclaimed with great emotion, "or why represent so attenuated a form? Oh! Maria," he cried, "why would you insist so long upon my silence? you are yet to learn, my dear sister," he continued, "how deeply your unfortunate brother is implicated in the deplorable alteration which has taken place in this once lovely young woman; who, when first I knew her, was in all the bloom of health, and promised long to continue a blessing to those friends, who will now I fear have soon to mourn her loss."

Edward then, as well as his agitated

feelings allowed him, gave his sister a succinct account of the commencement of his acquaintance with Miss Buckby to the present hour. When he had concluded Sophia, whose tears had vinced her sympathy for the sufferings of her brother and the unfortunate Maria, now entreated him so earnestly to allow of her imparting to her father and mother the source from whence his late unhappiness had arisen, that Edward not only gave the desired consent, but commissioned her to assure them his confidence would not have been so long withheld, but for those reasons they would soon be made acquainted with.

## CHAP. IV.



Edward had become intimate with a young man of the same college he was a member of, whose family resided within a few miles of the University. The elder Gress-ton was a sensible, gentlemanly man, who had retired from the busy haunts of men to a small estate he possessed in Cam-bridgeshire, which he amused himself in cultivating in a manner directly opposite to the mode practised by Agriculturists in that part of the world.

Edward often accompanied his friend in his visits to R—where he was always received with the most flattering marks of distinction. He had often heard of an orphan niece of Mr. Gressington's, who was sometimes an inmate of the family for several months at a time, though her nominal home was with an aunt in London, who, it was said, intended making Miss Buckby her heiress.

Maria was soon expected to pay her annual visit at R—and young Gressington had prepared his friend to see a beautiful and accomplished female, who had as yet escaped being spoiled by the admiration her appearance every where excited.

Edward suspected from the delight he observed young Gressington took in dwelling upon the virtues and graces of his fair relative, he had not been an indifferent ob-

server of them : and judging by the nature of his own feelings for Emily, naturally believed Maria was to her cousin {what Emily was to him, and when Gressington one morning entered his room, bringing the information of Miss Buckby's arrival and invitation from his mother to join a party at R—, invited purposely to meet her niece, Edward, smiling at the joy which appeared dancing in the eyes of his friend, as he urged him to accompany him home directly, instantly complied with his request.

He was received by Mr. and Mrs. Gressington with their accustomed cordiality, and introduced by them to their niece, whose beauty he soon found was her least attraction ; and had not the image of Emily acted as a talisman, to guard his heart from every other impression Maria Buckby could not be seen with indifference.

To a face and form, which for loveliness or proportion could scarcely be rivalled, Miss Buckby added a most fascinating sweetness of manner, which was far removed from every species of affectation. But unfortunately for herself, Maria possessed a susceptibility of disposition, which had rather been encouraged than checked in her early years, by her affectionate, but ill judging relative, Mrs. Conway; who had been accustomed to lavish the most tender caresses on the infant Maria, on observing her weeping over the death of an insect which she had unintentionally destroyed.

To this dangerous indulgence of a sensibility, which properly directed would have contributed to her happiness, might be ascribed most of her present sufferings, and which ultimately brought her to an untimely grave.

Humanity to animals ought most cer-

tainly to be early inculcated in young persons, but susceptibility of disposition should not be encouraged at the expence of strength of mind ; which every female, in some part or other of her life, will undoubtedly find occasion for the exercise of. Edward had passed the last Easter vacation in Hampshire, and nothing but the fear his uncle might think his declaration too premature, prevented his imparting to Emily the hopes he permitted himself to entertain of her allowing him some little time hence to claim a far dearer relationship to her, than that their present consanguinity entitled him to.

The day however when he was to take his degree he determined should be the last of his silence, as the following one he would return to Woodley, and at once end his suspense by opening his heart to his cousin, who almost from her cradle had been in possession of it, and who then he

hoped might be induced to give him hers in return.

Feeling himself perfectly safe from the attractions of any other woman, he was not aware of the danger resulting from the attentions he was daily in the habit of paying a young and interesting female, for whom he began to feel the regard of a brother.

It was now the summer vacation ; and wishing to avoid Emily till he had taken his degree, Edward determined upon remaining in College, instead of joining his family at Melcombe.

An apartment was always in readiness to receive him at R—, and young Gressington often prevailed upon him to take possession of it for several nights together.

Often, when Mr. Gressington and his son were engaged without doors, Edward

would read aloud to Mrs. Gressington and her neice their favorite authors, or accompany them in the charitable visits they were in the daily habit of making in the village of R—. He was indeed so firmly persuaded of a mutual affection subsisting between his friend and his cousin, that when the former rallied him one day on the conquest he had made of Maria; whose heart till now had been believed impenetrable, Edward took him to task for endeavouring to mislead him and enquired what was his reason for wishing him to continue in ignorance of his attachment.

An explanation immediately followed, and Gressington assured his friend his conjectures were entirely unfounded, if for a moment he believed he felt for his cousin a warmer sentiment than their relationship authorized; and ended with saying, nothing could give him greater gratification than seeing this beautiful and accomplished

young woman the wife of his beloved De Clairville.

Edward was not vain, yet he soon saw sufficient to convince him Gressington had not erred in the suspicions he entertained of the state of his cousin's heart.

Grieved that any thing in his conduct should have given rise to expectations it was totally impossible for him to realize, he from that time endeavoured to avoid paying those little attentions Maria had been accustomed to receive from him. The poor girl observed and deeply lamented his altered manner; she had allowed herself to cherish the belief of her being far from indifferent to him, and now she found how chimerical had been such hopes, instead of resolutely endeavouring to banish him her thoughts, she indulged herself in continually dwelling upon these attractions

that had almost unconsciously won her affections, and a deep melancholy soon took place of that quiet cheerfulness, by which she had been hitherto distinguished.

Edward, sensibly shocked at finding her health sinking under a hapless attachment, determined upon leaving R—, and not returning to it again whilst Miss Buckby continued an inmate of her Uncle's family. But before he went, wishing to impress the conviction on her mind, a prior attachment had alone made him insensible to her attractions, he took the earliest opportunity of mentioning Emily's name to her. He spoke of the affection, which from infancy he had felt for his cousin, and the hopes he entertained of calling her his in a few months ; and taking from its case a miniature, which his sister Harriet had painted of her and given to him, he put it into Maria's hands as he smilingly enquired, if she thought it pleaded his cause

for having so many years devoted himself to the original.

Miss Buckby's hand trembled as she received the picture, and changing colour almost instantaneously, the miniature fell from her grasp, and before Edward could hasten to her assistance she had sunk insensible to her seat.

Severely upbraiding himself as the occasion of her fainting, he instantly flew to the bell with great violence. It was answered by Mrs. Gressington, who alarmed at the situation in which she beheld her niece, earnestly entreated Mr. De Clairville to send directly for Mr. G—, the family Apothecary. Thinking his absence would prove a relief to Maria when she recovered her senses, Edward hastened to obey her Aunt, and then proceeded to his own apartment, in a frame of mind more easily supposed than described.

Young Gressington in another hour begged permission to enter, and after conversing for a short time on indifferent subjects, he touched upon his cousin's sudden indisposition which he had heard of from his mother, "You, I understand were in the room with Maria when she fainted," he added, "can you, De Clairville, in any way account for it?"

Edward's countenance too plainly informed his friend he was not ignorant of the occasion of Maria's indisposition, though the latter made no remarks upon it, and soon after left the room.

On joining the family at dinner De Clairville felt much relieved at finding Miss Buckby was not present: but it was some time before he could summon sufficient resolution to enquire after her. Mrs. Gressington replied, she hoped her niece was better, but that Mr. G— had desired she

might be kept perfectly quiet that day, to prevent any danger of a return of the fainting. “He promises me however,” she proceeded, “if Maria rests well to night, to allow of her joining the family tomorrow as usual. I wish he may not be too sanguine about her capability of doing this. She has looked unwell for some time, and has had an unusual depression on her spirits, which is too generally, I have remarked, a fore-runner of disease. Should she be going to be seriously indisposed, I know not what will become of any of us ; my sister loves her as a daughter ; and her uncle and myself strive which can be most indulgent to her when she is spared to us, and scarcely love our own child better than we do her. She is indeed a good girl, and deservedly dear to us all.

Edward wished to unite with Mrs. Gressington in the praise of her niece ; but his voice faltered on the first attempt, and he

remained silent, abashed, and truly uncomfortable.

Young Gressington left the table the instant it was cleared, without offering any apology to Edward ; he had scarcely spoken during dinner, or in a tone so different to the cordial one he had hitherto addressed him in, that had not the latter before decided upon returning to Cambridge that evening, the altered manner of his friend would have determined it.

The elder Gressington expressed surprise at his guest's sudden intention of leaving them so soon, but finding it could not be shaken, he endeavoured to appear satisfied with the excuses Edward made for his abrupt departure ; and the latter leaving his compliments for Mrs. Gressington and her niece, who he expressed his hopes of shortly hearing was perfectly recovered, left R—without seeing more of

his friend ; but had scarcely reached the end of a lane, which led from Mr. Gress-ton's house to the turnpike road, when he heard himself called by name, and discerned young Gressington hastening to overtake him.

“ De Clairville,” he cried, “ extending his hand, which the former received in silence, “ I am ashamed of my petulance and now most earnestly entreat your forgiveness not only of that, but of my late suspicions in believing you capable of acting so villainous a part as that of winning the affections of an amiable girl merely for your amusement. But Maria has undeceived me by candidly acknowledging she alone has been to blame in encouraging too warm a regard for my friend, whose affections she now finds are in the possession of another. She has exonerated you from any intention to deceive her in this respect, as only by one,

blinded as she confesses herself to have been by vanity, could your brotherly attentions have been misconstrued : and now aware of the impropriety of meeting you again after what had passed this morning, it is her fixed determination to leave R—directly.”

Edward hastily interrupting his friend, entreated him to prevail upon his cousin to give up her intention, assuring him she might with safety do it, as he faithfully promised not to present himself again at R—whilst Miss Buckby continued there.

Gressington said he was apprehensive Maria's health would suffer materially from the conflict she was then enduring, but perceiving the effect this remark had upon his friend, he apparently seemed anxious to change the conversation, and after giving Edward his promise of either sending or carrying him some intelligence

of Maria the next morning, he then left the former to proceed to Cambridge.

Accordingly the next day he made his appearance at the breakfast table of his friend, to whose enquiries after the invalid he returned only vague answers; and Edward was apprehensive Maria was more indisposed than her cousin wished him to believe.

Young Gressington was at length prevailed upon to confess, his mother felt so much alarmed on her account, she had called in a Physician, who evidently thought very ill of his patient. He then proceeded to say, his cousin had been in a consumption from infancy, and that two years since his aunt Mrs. Conway, had carried her to Bristol, from whence she had returned apparently restored to perfect health, and probably might have continued well, had

she not unfortunately for herself given way in a late instance to her great susceptibility.

Every succeeding day, by De Clairville's request, his friend brought him some account of Maria, who continued many weeks in a state of debility that alarmed her friends, as much as it harassed Edward, who continually heard from Gressington the hopes and fears that alternately were entertained by the Physician, who to the last was of an opinion his patient would never entirely lose the pain in the side, or the cough, which by its violence had already reduced her to a shadow.

Edward had at length the happiness of hearing Miss Buckby was so much recovered as to be able to take an airing every day in a low open carriage Mrs. Gressington usually drove herself; and earnestly hoping the medical man had been deceived

in his prognostics of the seeds of consumption being yet left, he once more began to look forward to the time fast approaching, when he was to take his degree, and after that his final leave of Cambridge.

## CHAP. IV.



There was that year only one fellow Commoner besides himself who had attended the schools. One morning when Edward was deeply engaged in solving a problem, he was interrupted by the entrance of this young man, who after conversing for some time on hopes and fears of the ensuing January, mentioned having received a letter from his brother residing in Hampshire, who informed him of a dashing wedding soon to take place in that county. “ You know the parties probably

De Clairville" he added, "as one of them is I believe a near relation of yours."

"Who can you possibly allude to!" returned Edward somewhat surprized. "I know of no relations I have in Hampshire, but my Uncle Sir Charles Rushbrook, and his daughter."

"It is Miss Rushbrook I mean," said young Desborough, "who is soon to be united to Lord Clavering."

"There must be some mistake of your brother's in the name of the lady who he affirms is to marry his Lordship. I cannot for an instant believe Emily is going to be married."

"And yourself not invited to the wedding. Is not that what you mean? But if Frederick is correct, of which I think there can be little doubt, as the intended bride-

groom is a friend of his your cousin will soon become Countess of Clavering and the wife of as noble a fellow as ever swelled the list of Earls in the red book. You are still sceptical I perceive, my dear friend, but if I do see you the next time we meet decorated in a white and silver favor, sent by the fair Emily as some compensation for having dared to marry without first applying for your consent, I shall at least expect to hear you make a handsome apology to me for having disbelieved the truth of my tale." Young Desborough then took his leave, but first extorted from his friend a reluctant promise to meet a party at his rooms the following evening.

Edward very often heard from Melbourne, but by the request of their father his sisters seldom mentioned Emily in their letters, or merely to say they believed she was well: as Mr. De Clairville was anxious his son should have nothing to take

his attention from his studies, it being his earnest wish, as Edward himself has proposed becoming a candidate for an honor, he should attain one of the highest. Edward now believed the reason for his sisters not having alluded to Emily of late was their knowledge of what was going forward in Hampshire, which they must be convinced would give him pain to know : and determining to know at once, whether there was any truth in the respect of her going to marry Lord Clavering, the moment Desborough left him he seized a sheet of paper and was beginning to address Harriet when Gressington's entrance interrupted him.

The latter soon perceived something had occurred to disturb his friend, and at length induced him to confess, not merely that his conjectures were right, but also the occasion of that uneasiness he had remarked. Gressington exclaiming against

the fickleness of women, offered to go immediately into the neighbourhood of Woodley, and learn at once whether the report was true, or without any foundation to rest upon. He silenced Edward's scruples by assuring him he had for some time intended visiting an Uncle in Hampshire, and he now should have an opportunity of gratifying his relation, and at the same time indulge himself in being of some service to a friend he so highly valued. Edward was aware he could receive an answer from Melcombe almost as early as he might expect to hear from Gressington, but it was possible his sister fearful of hurting his feelings would not confess all she knew of this affair, and not improbably hold out hopes to him, which perhaps would prove delusive ones.

Gressington promised to write the day after his arrival at his Uncle's, whose house being in the vicinity of the Park made it

probable he should soon become possessed of every particular of this projected alliance if there was any such a thing in agitation ; and then cordially shaking hands with his friend, and desiring him to keep up his spirits, he left him to prepare for his journey.

Four days elapsed without bringing the promised letter; and Edward (a prey to the most tormenting apprehensions,) confined himself (on the pretence of indisposition) entirely to his rooms. He had just formed the resolution of following his friend into Hampshire, when his suspense was terminated by the arrival of the long expected letter: the first lines of which decided his fate, as it told him Miss Rushbrook, his beloved Emily, would, (ere the intelligence could possibly reach him,) be the property of another.

Edward's senses forsook him for a time, on receiving this confirmation of his fears, that Emily was lost to him for ever; and seizing his hat he rushed from the room, and wandered he knew not whither; till on recovering his recollection, he found himself in a great state of bodily weakness, occupying his former apartment at R—and saw the mother of his friend watching beside him. Unable to comprehend how he came there, he entreated Mrs Gressington would explain the cause: but she insisted on his asking no questions, till the medical gentleman who attended and whom she every moment expected to visit him, gave his sanction for their being answered.

Edward endeavoured to comply with the wishes of his kind nurse and wait patiently the moment, when he hoped to be emancipated from this cruel constraint, but fancying he heard another step in the

room, besides Mrs. Gressington, he gently drew aside the curtains, and saw Miss Buckby engaged in pouring out some medicine which her Aunt soon after brought him to take. He was much hurt at seeing her look so thin and pale ; and the languor that appeared throughout her frame, too plainly betrayed how little calculated her strength at this time, was for attending in a sick room ; which he afterwards learned from Mrs. Gressington, she had constantly done from the first day of his being brought there.

The Physician paid another visit to his patient in the course of that day, and pronouncing him considerably better, gave Mrs. Gressington permission to enter upon the desired explanation.

Edward had wandered from his room, as was before observed, unknowing whi-

ther he went, till he nearly reached a stream that separated the lawn at Mr. Gressingtons, from a meadow beyond it. That gentleman was providentially not many yards from the spot, when he saw his young friend stumble over the withered root of a tree near the water, into which he was instantly precipitated ; and falling with great force, his head received a contusion, which had it not been for the timely arrival of Mr. Gressington with some labourers to his assistance, it is but too probable, Edward would have been gone for ever. He was conveyed insensible to the house and put to bed. A surgeon was sent for, who upon examining the blow, gave it as his opinion, had it been one third of an inch higher, it must instantly have deprived him of life.

The plunge into the water, at a time his blood had been so heated from the almost frenzied state of mind, occasioned a fever

which threatened to be of more serious consequence, than the contusion he had received in the fall.

Mr. Gressington alarmed at the serious looks of the Physician who had been called in, determined upon not allowing another day to pass, without sending off an express to Melcombe; every thing was prepared for this purpose, when Mrs. Gressington entered with the joyful news, their guest had recovered from his stupor, and the medical gentleman from his alarm.

It is impossible to describe the anxious solicitude, that marked the countenance and manners of Maria, through the whole of Edward's illness. Very far from well, herself, she had sat up with him several nights, but now that he was able to know, and thank her for all the fatigue, she had undergone on his account; she never allowed him an opportunity, as the

chief part of her time was spent in her own apartment, or at a friends house in the neighbourhood.

At length Mrs. Gressington very undesignedly gave him one. She was called from home to visit a poor woman in the village, who believing herself dying, particularly requested to see her ; and fearful her patient might want any thing in her absence, she commisioned her niece to supply her place in the apartment of the invalid, Maria unwillingly acceded to the request of her aunt ; she was now fully aware the best course she could pursue, was resolutely to shun him, whose late sufferings had encreased the too tender interest, she had already allowed herself to feel.

Mrs. Gressington had seen her niece apparently as much affected by the illness of an indifferent person, as she had lately

been by that of Edward's, and having heard from her son the attachment of the latter to Miss Rushbrook, she had never allowed the idea to cross her mind of his being more to Maria, than a sensible and pleasant young man is to females in general. Young Gressington had kept his cousin's secret, and earnestly as he wished to see her the wife of his friend, he had never allowed himself to breathe this desire to any one.

Mrs. Gressington therefore, after giving every necessary direction to her niece, concerning the time, manner &c. the medicines were to be administered to her patient, quitted the room and hastened to visit the poor woman who was in anxious expectations, awaiting her arrival.

For some time after she had left them, Edward and his companion continued silent. The latter finding her situation be-

come every moment the more distressing, ventured to make a remark upon the weather, took her netting, and changed her seat for one near the window (at some distance from the sofa Edward was reclining on;) forgetting that she had but the moment before complained of the cold.

He observed her intention was to avoid him; and his heart reproached him for not returning an attachment so devoted as that Maria had lately more than ever evinced.

“Where,” thought he, “can I meet with a more amiable companion, now Emily is lost to me?” he again looked towards her, and remarked that though apparently engaged with work, her trembling hands would not allow her to make much progress in it. No longer master of himself at this sight, he hastily arose, and approaching her, said, why my dear Miss Buckby do

you keep this distance, when you must be aware how much my heart wishes to thank you, for all the kind attention I have received from you during my late severe illness."

Maria's voice faltered as she tried to assure him what she had done for him, was no more than she should have done for any other who had been an equal sufferer with himself.

Never had she appeared to him so lovely as at this minute. Emily was forgotten, and he saw only before him an interesting young female, whose heart he was assured was all his own; and believing he felt for the poor Maria, a sentiment almost equally warm as that she experienced for him, he almost before he was aware of it, had offered himself to her acceptance. Maria scarcely able to believe she had understood him aright, turned her eyes upon him with an expression of

such doubt, as sensibly affected him ; but when she found he was indeed in earnest, the unexpected change from misery to happiness, was too much for her weakened frame to support, and Edward again beheld her fainting ; but he soothing her by the most endearing names, soon restored her to recollection ; and before parting they had come to an entire explanation. Edward accounted for having been found by her Uncle wandering so far from Cambridge, at the same time he assured her, (what he then firmly believed himself,) that Emily's conduct had entirely cured him of his attachment to her, and that he loved nothing on earth so well as herself.

Maria believed him ; nevertheless she once hinted her fears of his family not sanctioning their union ; but he would not allow her to cherish this idea a moment.

It was his intention to have written an explanatory letter immediately to his father ; but Gressington, who returned from Hampshire at the time, being made acquainted with what had passed, prevented his friend doing what he knew was right. By his interposition, his father and mother continued ignorant of what was going on under their roof. The reasons he assigned for this were plausible, but Edward confessed to his sister, he certainly ought not to have suffered himself to be guided by them.

Edward in another week was able to return to College and take his degree, which he had scarcely done, when Gressington came to his room to seek, and inform him of his cousin having been under the necessity of accompanying his mother to London, who had been summoned thither on business of importance. At the same time he put into his friend's hand a note from the latter explaining the occa-

sion of her absence, and giving him her direction in Town.

Edward determined upon immediately following her thither, and after acquainting her friends with their engagement to hasten to Melcombe, and make similar explanations on the subject to his own family.

He was making all preparations for leaving Cambridge, when a letter from Sophia desired him to settle his affairs with all speed, and hasten to join their Uncle and Emily at Melcombe, who were coming to them for some time, she also mentioned the hopes they entertained of seeing the Howard's, and their little boy, in the course of a few days; and in her postscript added, "you perhaps may have heard of Emily's refusing a coronet, why she has done so, I leave you to find out."

Edward's feelings on reading those lines, were indeed pitiable. By his own precipitancy, he had raised an insuperable barrier to his ever being more than a friend, to the only woman his heart now told him, he could ever really love; and his senses threatened to leave him a second time. The image of Emily's disengages entirely superseded that of the unfortunate Maria, and throwing himself into the chaise he had ordered to take him the first stage to London, he proceeded rapidly to Melcombe, where he found Sir Charles and his daughter had been resident some time.

Emily received her cousin as she had been accustomed to do; and her father by the joy he expressed at seeing one, whom he already considered as his son, increased the wretchedness of him, upon whom these marks of regard were lavished. Edward shut himself up in his apartment, which he

scarcely left, but at his meals, or to take a solitary ramble in the grounds. A letter from Maria, which had been forwarded from Cambridge, roused him in some degree. She had heard the rumour of Emily's marriage with Lord Clavering confidently contradicted, and now wrote to entreat Edward, to forget what had passed between them, when they had every reason to believe the truth of the report. Maria assured him, it would be impossible for her to feel happy at the expence of Miss Rushbrook ; and added the only proof he could give of his wishing to see her pass the remainder of her days in tranquillity, would be to unite himself immediately to the friend, and companion of his early years.

Much affected by the contents of this letter, Edward for a few minutes believed the writer of it, was even dearer to him than her rival ; when the voice of Emily

reaching him as she was speaking in a plaintive voice to Harriot, too surely convinced him, no other woman could supply her place in his affections. But honor forbade his breaking with Maria; he therefore wrote, assuring her, he was as desirous, as ever of ratifying his engagement, and apologised for having passed through London, without calling upon her; assigned an excuse for it, which he trusted she would accept, and ended his letter with declaring that he only waited her consent, to mention their engagement to his family.

By return of post, he received another letter from Miss Buckby, entreating him so earnestly to defer his purposed explanation, that Edward promised to continue for the present, silent on the subject.

Shortly after this, he received a letter from young Gressington, who had been

attacked with a fever, which had left him so exceedingly reduced, that he had little expectation of ever recovering from it; and feeling, it was impossible for him to die easy without the forgiveness of his friend, whose confidence he had so cruelly imposed upon, in the temporary absence of his nurses, (one of whom was his indulgent mother,) endeavoured to explain the inducement which had tempted him to act so contrary to the principles that had been instilled into him from childhood. He then stated, that the anxiety for his cousins, life, (which he had reason to fear would fall a sacrifice to her love) induced him, to make the offer of going into the neighbourhood of Woodley to learn the truth of the report, of Miss Rushbrook's engagement to Lord Clavering. He added, that from the first he disbelieved it, as only a few days before, he had understood the young Earl was in the neighbourhood

of Cambridge, paying the most unequivocal attentions to the daughter of the gentleman, at whose house he was then visiting. "When I sat down to write the letter," continued he "which was to lacerate the heart of him, for whom (notwithstanding my conduct appeared to contradict it,) I felt such a warm regard I more than once threw away my pen, unable to trace the lines that were to convince him of the perfidy of her, who (I knew) was dearer to him, than all the world besides. Maria's image returning to my recollection, (such as I had seen her the day before I left R—) determined me to proceed. I knew it was impossible for her to live, if she did not exert every effort to overcome her unhappy attachment, (of which I saw no hopes;) but if once your wife, I trusted she would soon recover her health, and believing it impossible Miss Rushbrook could feel a more devoted affection than that my cousin experienced for you, I tried to persuade myself, I was doing

you a material benefit, by inducing you to turn your thoughts upon my cousin, (to whom I was certain you were very partial,) when convinced of the fickleness of the former. I was aware you seldom heard much of Miss Rushbrook from your sisters, having often been present when you received letters from them, which you usually read to me, and never concluded without upbraiding them for their silence in this respect. All this was absurd sophistry, and I now too plainly perceive it to have been such, but dare not plead my once thinking it otherwise as an excuse for having trifled with truth; yet I will hope my penitence may induce you to extend to me that forgiveness, I find it impossible to die easy without obtaining.

“There is indeed little expectation of Maria's long continuing an impediment to your re-union with your Emi-

ly ; as the account my mother gives me of her health, too surely convinces me, I have injured myself, without eventually serving her."

This letter reached Edward a few days after Emily had left Melcombe. The indignation he might have felt at finding that he had been so much deceived by one, for whom he had experienced so warm a regard yielded to the wish of relieving his friend's mind of the weight which oppressed it, by sending him the assurance of his forgiveness : which done he hastened to London, where he found, Maria's danger had not been magnified by her cousin.

Miss Buckby was again confined to her bed ; but before he returned to Melcombe, she was able to leave her room, though too weak to bear any exertion; Edward's heart upbraided him as the occasion of all her

sufferings; and he now implored her to consent to his mentioning to his family their engagements. But still Maria appeared averse to his doing this, and fearing to continue a subject, that agitated her so much, he reluctantly allowed it to drop.

Mrs. Conway had for some time suspected the mind of her niece was far from tranquil; and a few days before Edward's arrival in Town, she had persuaded Maria to confide to her the secret cause of that uneasiness, which had been so apparent, since her last visit into Cambridgeshire.

Mrs. Conway now by Edward's desire, united her rhetoric in endeavouring to prevail upon her niece, to take off the interdict she had laid upon him; not to mention their engagement to any one for the present. But all was in vain, Maria with tears begged to be indulged a little

longer ; and they unwillingly promised to be directed by her.

Miss Buckby hoped, (by persuading Edward to defer for a time entering on his desired explanation with his family,) her death, (which she beleived not far distant,) would prevent any occasion for his coming to one on the subject ; forgetting how improbable it was, they had not long since been aware of some entanglement, from his altered manner to his cousin.

Edward little suspecting the reasons that deterred Maria from granting her permission for the opening his heart to his family, returned to Melcombe, from whence he wrote frequently to her, but seldom received an answer to any of his letters. The distress of his father and mother, at parting from Harriot, had alone deterred him from breaking through the promise he had given

Miss Buckby, who, he began to think ought, not to have extorted it from him. A severe illness followed; occasioned entirely by mental suffering; and he was again prevented from confiding to his family, the conflict he had so long endured. The shock he experienced at so unexpectedly meeting in the specimen which his sister had put into his hands of her painting from nature, the resemblance of Maria, (now reduced to a shadow) has already been described. In as few words as possible, he had related to Sophia, the history of this unfortunate young lady, as connected with himself; and to the great alarm of the former, he now declared his resolution fixed, of setting off immediately for London, and that nothing should induce him to return till Maria had consented to become his wife.

Mr. De Clairville, upon hearing from Sophia a brief account of the sufferings of

her brother, instantly hastened to offer him all the consolation in his power. Plainly perceiving that Maria, beleiving the fulfilling their engagement would be a source of misery to both, was anxious Edward should from time to time defer entering into an explanation with his family, till she was no longer an inhabitant of this world, he endeavoured to prepare his son for what he feared was irrecoverable. For some time Mr De Clairville found him decided upon going the next morning to Town; but when his mother, conjured him not to think of such a thing in his weak state, and proposed taking the journey herself, and trying her influence with Miss Buckby, to induce her to comply with the wishes of them all, in returning to Melcombe with her, Edward yielded; and expressing his gratitude for her intended kindness to the poor sufferer, fell back on the sofa completely exhausted by the excess of his feelings.

Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville left him to the care of Sophia, who after, seeing him more composed, went in search of her mother, who, she earnestly entreated, would permit her to be her companion to Town.

After some little hesitation her request was complied with, and early the following morning, Mrs. De Clairville and her daughter commenced their journey, leaving Ellen to take her sister's place, in the apartment of her brother.

Sophia wrote daily to Melcombe. Her letters were for some time cheering ones; and Edward began to flatter himself, Maria had not been so ill, as his sister's sketch had represented. But feeling anxious to see her, and judge for himself the state of her health, he made preparations for joining his mother and sister in Town. His father proposed to accompany him, and the

day was fixed for their departure, when a letter arrived from Mrs. De Clairville containing the mournful intelligence of Maria's being no more.

Mr. De Clairville dreading the effects it might produce upon his son's weakened frame, for some minutes felt incapable of breaking the contents of his mother's letter to him. At length summoning up all his fortitude, he endeavoured in some degree to preparé him to bear it with resignation, The event proved his fears were not unfounded, all his care did not prevent the blow proving too heavy for Edward. He was conveyed insensible to his bed, from which he did not rise for many days, and then in so reduced a state, that great apprehensions were entertained of his going into a decline.

Mrs. De Clairville and Sophia returned

to Melcombe a few days after that, on which poor Maria was consigned to her grave ; and assisted in watching beside the pillow of this beloved relative. The Physician earnestly recommended change of air and scene for his patient, and thought Clifton would prove the most beneficial to him. Lodgings were instantly procured there, and as soon as Edward was able to bear the journey, he was accompanied thither by his family and Charles Warburton, who entreated permission to be of the party.

## CHAP. VI.



It had been the intention of Mrs. De Clairville, to take lodgings on her arrival in London near Mrs. Conway's, but that Lady made such a point of accommodating her, and Sophia with apartments in her house, that she found it impossible to avoid complying with her wishes.

Miss Buckby was much agitated at first meeting the mother and sister of Edward ;

and when she found they came purposely to prevail upon her to return to Melcombe where she would be received by Mr. De Clairville as the intended wife of his son, her emotion was so great, that it scarcely suffered her to express the feelings of gratitude, such attention called forth ; at the time she decidedly, though gently excused herself from accepting the invitation into —shire.

Mrs De Clairville was deceived by the brightness of her eyes ; and the fine colour of Maria's cheek ; and believed she only wanted country air, and the society of her son, to perfect her recovery ; when in fact these favorable symptoms, as she believed them to be, were the worst it was possible for her to have.

In the transient glance Maria had caught of Sophia at Kensington gardens, she was struck with the resemblance, she

bore her brother ; and remarked to her aunt, who was her companion that morning. This alone would have been sufficient to have ensured her regard, but she soon learnt to love Sophia for herself ; the latter devoted every hour in the day to her, so that Mrs. Singleton and her sister, who often called upon her, complained grievously of not being able to enjoy her society five minutes together.

One evening that Maria had appeared better than usual, Sophia led the conversation to her brother, whose attachment to her, she would not allow her to doubt a moment. Miss Buckby smiled upon her friend, and said she found her a greater cordial, than all the medicines her physician prescribed ; and Sophia had the pleasure of remarking her spirits were considerably better, than she had yet seen them.

The next morning she as usual, went to

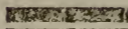
enquire how she had rested. Maria assured her better than she had done for many nights, and motioning her to take a seat on the side of her bed, she requested to hear what had induced Edward to break the promise she had extorted from him, not to mention their engagements to his family. Sophia complied with her request, and described the effects the little sketch which she had taken of her, had produced upon her brother. She then ventured to add, that her mother soon expected him in town, and hoped his rhetoric, might induce her to alter her resolution of not visiting Melcombe at present. Maria gently pressed her hand, but remained silent. At length she said, "I must not my dear Sophia, suffer you to flatter yourself I shall ever recover, I am thankful for the hours of ease I have lately been favoured with; which have, I trust not been lost upon me, and I am ready to resign my spirit into the hands of a merciful God, whenever he thinks

proper to recall it.—One thing I confess I feel very anxious about; it is that your dear brother and his Emily may be united as soon as possible, to prevent the danger of their being again separated.”—Maria here paused, but in another minute she proceeded. “I cannot my dear friend express all I feel, for the unexampled kindness you and your beloved brother have shewn me!—but it is registered *here*,”—laying her hand upon her heart, “and into another state I hope to carry the remembrance of it.”—Sophia fearing she was exerting herself far too much, tried to persuade her to take some cordial medicine, and then compose herself to sleep; promising to sit by her till she awoke; and then if she wished it, would assist her to rise. Maria smiled, and gently pressing her hand, said she would be ruled by her, and swallowing the medicine, soon fell into a slumber. As she slept, Sophia thought she observed her features were a

little convulsed; and wishing to call her mother, she was rising with that intention, as Maria opened her eyes, and thinking she was going to leave her, begged she would remain yet a little longer. Again she appeared to slumber, but her convulsions increased, and again Sophia rose to summons assistance, but found her hand was forcibly grasped by her friend. Whilst hanging over her with apprehensions the most alarming, Maria once more closed her eyes, but the film of death had clouded their lustre—she turned to Sophia, whose tears unconsciously fell fast upon the hand she held, and attempted to speak, but her articulation was imperfect.—Once more her features were convulsed, but this time only for a moment; the hand that held Sophia's released its grasp, and the next instant Maria was no more!—Sophia's agony was so great, at finding her friend was gone for ever, it was some time before she was able to recover sufficiently from it, to

announce the fatal tidings to her mother and Mrs. Conway, who accustomed to leave Maria to the care of her friend at these hours, were sitting as usual, at work in the drawing room. Sophia's countenance at once explained her melancholy errand. Mrs. Conway, totally unprepared for the suddenness of the event, was for some days in a most pitiable state. Mrs. Gressington was sent for, and assisted Mrs. De Clairville and her daughter in offering all the consolation in their power to bestow; and a few days after the funeral of their niece, the sisters left Town for Cambridge-shire, at the same time, Sophia and her Mother, taking a most affecting leave of the relatives of the lost Maria, directed their course to Melcombe.

## CHAP. VII.



Sir Charles Rushbrook had been aware of the uneasiness his nephew's loss of spirits, had occasioned his family ; and suspecting some entanglement as the cause, mentioned his suspicions to Mr. De Clairville, who feared they were not without foundation.

Edward's attachment to his cousin had been observed with pleasure by the parents of both. Sir Charles having no son, look-

ed forward to the time, when united to his daughter, Edward would become such to him : and in the early part of his visit to Melcombe, he held several conversations with his brother, and sister on the subject, when it was agreed, things should be left to work for themselves ; no doubts being entertained of Edward's seeking the first opportunity on his return, to open his heart to them, and confess the hopes, it was so evident he cherished, of some day or other, being permitted to call Emily his own. But the event proved otherwise. Instead, as formerly, seeking every occasion of conversing with his cousin, he was now observed to avoid her with equal care ; and if by any chance he found himself alone with her he would remain silent, or else abruptly quit the room.

Sir Charles felt disposed to be very angry with his nephew, till he remarked his evident unhappiness. He then felt anxious

to question him upon it, but Edward equally desirous of shunning his uncle, gave the latter no opportunity of putting his design into execution. Sir Charles did not repeat the invitation he had before given his nephew, to return with him into Hampshire ; but observing the latter trembling from agitation as he parted from Emily, his heart was again softened, and holding out his hand to him, as he followed Sophia and her cousin to the carriage, assured him of a sincere welcome when ever he felt disposed to visit Woodley.

Mr. De Clairville anxious his son's late mysterious conduct should be explained to his uncle ; sent Sir Charles the particulars of the history, he had only the day before became acquainted with himself. The Baronet was sensibly affected at learning the occasion of that deep melancholy that had so long preyed upon his nephew ; but kept from his daughter, the correspondence

passing between himself and his brother on the subject, till the death of Miss Buckby made it no longer necessary for him to be silent upon it.

On hearing Edward's engagement with Maria, which the firm belief of having lost her for ever, had occasioned his entering so precipitately into, Emily shed many tears. To have saved the life of this interesting young woman, she believed, she could have consented to give up every hope of her cousin's ever being more to her, than a tender relative ; and hearing the effect her death had produced upon him, she thought it plainly evinced, his heart had at last been won by such disinterested affection, and was now most probably for ever buried in the grave of Maria.

Emily was therefore anxious to consider him for the future as her cousin only ; but feeling extreme repugnance to meet

him at present, she gave a decided negative to the plan suggested by her father, of joining the Melcombe family at Clifton. Indeed Emily would have preferred remaining at Woodley, where she could enjoy the constant society of Mrs. Sedley, whose little mansion had been lately enlivened by a visit from Mrs. Stapleton, but the urgent entreaties of Sir Charles to accompany him in a little tour, which he thought might be beneficial to her spirits, would not allow her wish of continuing when she was to be gratified, and unwilling to give pain by a second refusal to so tender and excellent a parent, Emily made instant preparations for attending him to Paris, where Sir Charles had not been since the commencement of the revolution; and thither he now proposed carrying his daughter.

The same day that Sir Charles and Emily embarked from S— for France, the Mel

combe family took possession of a delightful house at Clifton.

Sophia was her brother's constant companion, she encouraged him to speak of Maria, whose death he for some time could not be induced to believe he had not occasioned. The good effect resulting from her management of him, was soon apparent. Edward's health rapidly improved, and in a short time he was able to walk to the pump room with Sophia for his only support.

Charles Warburton finding his friend no longer required his attendance, left him, to ride with Ellen, who was never able to walk any distance, without suffering from the exertion.

In their daily walks to the pump room, Edward and his sister generally met a gentleman with an interesting female hanging

on his arm, but had not been able to make out who they were, till one morning, that Mr De Clairville accompanied them. On entering the room, which was fuller than usual, Sophia heard her name pronounced, and looking round perceived young Willoughby, who expressing his pleasure at the meeting, enquired if she had not discovered her *protogée* Annie Falconer, who made one of the present company. "You appear incredulous," he laughingly continued, "nevertheless if you turn your eyes to the right, you will find I have not asserted any thing but what is most strictly true."

Sophia did as she was desired, and saw Miss Falconer in earnest conversation with the same gentleman and lady, she had so often remarked in the pump room before ; and the next moment she was recognised by Annie, who could scarcely express her joy at so unexpectedly seeing her there. "This is the second agreeable surprize I

have met with this morning," she proceeded, "as till I came hither, I was not aware of meeting part of the Ainsley family."

Miss Falconer's eyes sank under the expressive ones of Sophia, as she archly congratulated her upon so pleasing an event; and mentioning the happiness it would afford her to be introduced to her friends; Annie instantly complied with her request; and Sophia had the pleasure of finding Mr. Ainsley and his sister were equally desirous of becoming known to the kind protectress of their friend.

Lady Berwick was at this time, on her way to the Land's end where she intended passing the summer, and as Bristol was but a few miles out of her way, she had taken the opportunity of paying a visit to a very old friend in its vicinity.

Mrs. De Clairville being acquaint-

ed with this, intended to call upon her Ladyship the next day, who readily permitted Miss Falconer to pass the greater part of her time at Clifton with her friends, and also promised to spare her for a fortnight to Sophia after the family's return to Melcombe.

Henry Ainsley and Edward soon became very intimate friends, and the latter finding his friend under the necessity of repairing to Town, as he expected promotion, agreed to accompany him thither hoping to meet his Uncle. Captain Rushbrook at the Admiralty, and induce him to return back with them to the Lodge.

Ormsby Willoughby was a great favorite with them all ; he had discovered the attachment of Henry Ainsley to Annie, and learning, it had been some years standing, determined upon resolutely striving to get

the better of that he still felt for her, and forwarding, if it was in his power her union with his rival. But thinking it wiser to avoid her for the present, he declined accepting Mr. De Clairville's invitation to be of the party at Melcombe, and taking a cordial leave of all, he directed his course further west.

Sophia's attention had been so wholly occupied with her brother and poor Maria she had little leisure for turning her thoughts upon herself: but now that the former no longer required her cares, they again reverted to Lord d'Arcy, who she had heard from Emily was still at Paris. His Lordship was a great favorite with Sir Charles, whose doors were opened to him at all hours. Lord d'Arcy felt a similar regard for the Baronet, his being the Uncle of Sophia, would have drawn him to the hotel he occupied at Paris, as from him and Emily he could alone hope to

gain any intelligence of her. His Lordship's attaching himself so much to Sir Charles and his daughter, occasioned a report of his being engaged to the latter. Lord Montreuil at length heard it, and equally averse to his son's connecting himself with the Baronet's family, as with Mr. De Clairville's, he determined upon joining Lord d'Arcy in France, and desired his wife and daughter to make immediate preparations for accompanying him thither.

Lady Montreuil willingly consented, as she longed again to embrace her son, whose absence was severely felt by her. The marquis of Ormondsty now considered by the Earl and Countess as their future son in law was to be of the party. Lady Grace a few days before she left England, wrote to Sophia, requesting to hear often from her, and promising to send her every particular worthy of remark.

she met with in her Travels. It was, she said, her father's intention to proceed directly to Italy, where an old and very intimate friend of his early years resided, and whither her brother was to accompany them.

Sophia believed Lord Montreuil's design in engaging the attendance of his son in this town, was to separate them entirely ; and now felt apprehensive he would prohibit his daughter from corresponding with her ; and if so, prevent her ever hearing of one, whom she had no hopes of learning any particulars of, but through his sister. Unwilling to render her parents uneasy by seeing her unhappy, Sophia exerted herself to appear in spirits before them ; and both Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville began to flatter themselves Lord d'Arcy was no longer remembered. They had heard of his being in France, but knew not the time he had left England,

nor their daughter having met him in London.

Annie Falconer's and Miss Ainsley's society was particularly gratifying to Sophia. Ellen's time was so wholly taken up with Charles Warburton, she found little to devote to her family, she was entirely ignorant of any thing serious having passed between lord d'Arcy and her sister; had she been the least aware of the sufferings Sophia had endured on this account, Charles would for a time have been forgotten in her sympathy for her sister, who she loved with the purest affection.

George again at home, was always ready to accompany his sister and her friends in their evening rambles. The grounds around Melcombe were particularly beautiful, A walk extended many miles through the plantations, in which had been erected a dairy. It consisted of two apart-

ments, the first is fitted up with the greatest taste by Mrs. De Clairville, containing every utensil belonging to a place designed by such an appellation, all made of the finest china. The second room might either be entered through the first or by steps leading from a noble lawn on which it opened, and partly enclosed by sloping grounds finely wooded. A small rivulet separated it on the south side from the park where herds and deer are continually grazing; and beyond it hills and dales alternately presented themselves between the trees, all highly cultivated. Sophia and her young friend often took their work or drawing materials to this their favorite spot, where George would sometimes join them; but soon throwing away the volume he brought purposely to read to them, he would often vainly try to induce his companions to accompany him to seek amusement in climbing hills around; from whence he seldom returned without bringing An-

nie, who delighted in the study of botany, some curious plant to inspect.

Captain Rushbrook's arrival with Edward and Henry Ainsley, became the signal for general hilarity. Miss Falconer had been allowed to extend her fortnight to a month; yet what with company at home, and visiting abroad, Sophia and her friends found very little time for the dairy.

Captain Rushbrook whose spirits were as high as ever, allowed no one to look serious in his presence; Sophia's name resounded throughout the house if he found her absent from the usual sitting room, and till he had succeeded in finding her, it was impossible for any one to rest at peace.

## CHAP. VIII.



The return of Lord Deresford and his sisters to the Priory, was annouuced by the bells of the village steeple, which were heard by the Melcombe party, as they were one evening returning from a dinner visit, in the neighbourhood.

George was in raptures at the thoughts of seeing his favourite Miss Deresfords again, and declared his intention of riding

over the next morning, to invite them and and their brother, to join their party the following day in an excursion to ———, the seat of the Duke of R——, which Captain Rushbrook had expressed a desire to visit.

Sophia, earnestly as she wished it, dared not venture to entreat her brother to desist from his design. She had not mentioned to her parents Lord Deresford's manner, the last evening they had met, as it would have been impossible for her to have accounted for it, without speaking of his cousin, whose name, since her return, she had not yet suffered to pass her lips.

Edward, who was riding near his sister, soon saw something had disconcerted her, and tenderly enquired what it was, when finding her unwilling to assign any other reason, than a head ache for her silence; he forbore pressing his enquiries.

At breakfast, the following morning; Mrs. De Clairville proposed calling at the Priory, and all but Sophia agreed to be of the party: but complaining still of a headache she begged to be permitted to remain at home. As soon as the cavalcade moved from the door, Sophia collected together her drawing materials, and taking the way to the dairy, intended establishing herself there the whole of the morning, to put the last finish to a miniature, she was painting of her eldest brother, which she hoped to present to Emily on her return to England.

She had been nearly an hour employed in this manner, when the sound of voices reached her; and supposing the party were returned, she was hastily putting away her pencils intending to seek them, and learn the reason for having altered their intention of paying the Deresfords a visit; when she distinguished the voices

were those of her youngest brother and Lord Deresford.

Sophia unwilling to meet the Viscount, but in her family circle, instantly retreated through the door that opened into the inner apartment, which she had scarcely closed after her, when the footsteps of those she was fleeing from, were heard ascending the steps from the lawn. Scarcely stoping to recover breath, she flew along the walk, till she reached a small gate, that seperated it from the lawn before the house, but fearing George (who hearing that she had not accompanied the others to the Priory,) might seek her there, she dared not venture to enter it, but turned aside, nor slackened her pace, till she found refuge in a cottage, without the Park; which she had been in the daily habit of visiting since her return from Clifton.

The wife of the occupier of it, had

been attacked with a rheumatic fever, which had confined her some time to her bed, and still prevented her doing for her family, as she could have wished. Sophia having heard of her situation, begged her father to permit her sending for medical advice; but not satisfied with that alone, she had hired a woman in the village to attend upon the invalid, and take care of the children.

The poor woman had seen her young benefactress late the preceding evening, and had not expected her again till the following, yet Sophia found every thing within the house in perfect order. The children coming in, she took the infant from the eldest girl, and amused herself some time with nursing it: then resigned her charge, she gratified the fond mother by hearing the youngest boy read his lesson.

Mr. De Clairville had established a school for girls in Melcombe many years, which his wife had been in the habit of attending, but since her daughters had grown up, Mrs. De Clairville had resigned to them the superintendence of it.

One for boys, Mr. De Clairville overlooked himself, but was sometimes accompanied by his family who distributed rewards to them that had been the most diligent.

Little William had been admitted into the last only a few weeks, and he told his mother he hoped one day to read so well, that the young ladies would give him a testament, as they had done Dick Garret, and Bob Jackson, the last time they had visited the school.

In this secure retreat, Sophia remained till within half an hour of dinner, then

desiring to hear in the morning how Mrs. Ashby had rested, she kissed the children, and entreated William to continue as good a boy, as he had hitherto been, and she should love him very dearly, she left the cottage, followed by the blessings of its inhabitants, and reached her apartment without encountering either her brother, or his companion.

Sophia had scarcely changed her dress, when the party returned from their morning's visit, Annie hastened to seek her friend, who she was happy to find recovered from her headach; Ellen soon followed and delivered a thousand kind remembrances, she had been charged with, from the ladies of the Priory. "George," she continued, "left them soon after breakfast, and had persuaded Lord Deresford to return with him to Melcombe, but not having met them in our way thither, we thought the Miss Dsresfords must have mistaken their

intention," Ellen then enquired of her sister if she had seen any thing of either.

Sophia answered she had not, then blushing at her prevarication, added, "yet I thought, I heard George's voice once in the course of the morning; but the far greater part of it, I passed with the poor Ashby's."

Margaret, who was assisting Ellen to take off her habit, now said, she had seen Mr. George and a gentleman cross the lawn, not an hour after the family had driven from the door, and had heard the Butler say it was Lord Deresford; but whether his Lordship was yet at the Lodge, she could not say.

Sophia earnestly hoped he was not; but on entering the dining room, the first object she beheld was himself, in *propria persona*, who instantly approached to pay his compliments to her, at the same time

expressing his hope that she felt no more of the indisposition, which he had just heard, prevented her accompanying the party to the Priory.

Sophia attempted to answer this speech, with the same ease it was apparently spoken ; but her heightened colour told Lord Deresford, she had not forgotten his manner, or the language he had made use of, the evening he so abruptly quitted her at the Marchioness of D—'s.

George enquired of his sister, if she had not been at the dairy that morning Upon her answering in the affirmative, in as steady a tone as she could command, he continued, “ and was you aware of having left Edward's miniature exposed to the sun's rays; at least it would have been, had not Lord Deresford kindly taken compassion upon it, and placed it carefully in your Port-folio;

the contents of which we afterwards amused ourselves in looking over. One piece, particularly engaged the attention of my companion, and if you have my dear Sophia, one single grain of generosity in your disposition, you will make his Lordship a present of it.

Sophia felt ready to sink with confusion, at hearing the piece her brother alluded to, had met the eyes of Lord Deresford. Cowper's oak, (as she had accustomed herself to call the fine tree in the centre of the Priory park,) was there presented, divested of its foliage, whose outstretched arms, and immense trunk, half concealed the house, which appeared at some distance from it. Two figures were discerned skaiting on the lake, who were instantly recognised for George and Lord d'Arcy. It was evident she had taken particular pains with the last figure, which George had been instantly struck with ; and determined upon

letting her know it, took the first opportunity of rallying her upon the subject.

The prominent figure his cousin made in the piece, had given Lord Deresford a pang when it first met his eyes, he could with difficulty conceal from his young friend; and observing Sophia's confusion as her brother was rallying her upon it, an involuntary sigh escaped him, which was overheard by Captain Rushbrook, and did not pass unnoticed, at the same time he expressed a wish to see a specimen of his niece's style of designing, and George promised to gratify him after dinner, if he would accompany him to the dairy, where his sister had left her drawings. Sophia however secretly determined upon removing them, before her brother had an opportunity of putting his design into execution.

The conversation at dinner turned upon the news of the day. Captain Rushbrook

said, now peace was re-established, and his services no longer required; he had serious thoughts of casting anchor in the neighbourhood of Melbourn, and looking out for a wife, unless Sophia would promise to keep his house.

Mrs. De Clairville proposed his occupying "the cottage," as it was called, just without the park, which was at present uninhabited, but might be made a comfortable dwelling, and where Sophia could visit him every day.

"But who will guarantee her remaining with us any time," cried her uncle, looking archly towards Lord Deresford as he spoke, "I already suspect there are privateers, hovering about, who are watching to pick up this tight little vessel and bear her off, before we are aware of their design."

Lord Deresford's colour heightened, as

he attempted to join in the laugh, this speech had excited.

Upon hearing Lord d'Arcy was certainly gone abroad, he believed his fears of an attachment between him and Sophia, were groundless. Once more he determined to try what unremitted attention might do for him. The illness of his favorite sister prevented him following her to Clifton, but on the recovery of his sister, finding the De Clairville family were returned to Melcombe, he proposed spending the remainder of the summer at the Priory.

The view he had obtained of the drawing in the dairy apartment, had renewed his fears of Sophia being far from indifferent to his cousin : but his hopes soon returned in reflecting his rival was far away, whilst he should have constant opportunities affording him, for carrying on the attack he still meditated on her heart.

Sophia the moment she could make her escape from the dining room, flew to the diary, and returning with equal speed, deposited her port folio and its contents in her cabinet, determining to allow no one another opportunity of looking it over.

On joining the party in the drawing room, she heard a walk proposed through the plantations, and congratulated herself on having removed the drawings in time, to prevent their being profaned by the eyes of idle curiosity.

Lord Deresford eagerly endeavoured to gain her attention, but unwilling to give the slightest encouragement to hopes, it was evident he still entertained, she kept aloof as much as possible, and by occupying a seat between her friends Annie and Miss Ainsley, prevented his approaching her.

Edward observed his sister's avoidance of the Viscount, and when she took his arm as they left the house, after having declined the offered one of Lord Deresford, he questioned her upon the subject.

Sophia confessed, she was not satisfied with her present behaviour, but knew not other way of checking hopes, she was concerned to find his Lordship, still allowed himself to cherish.

“ If my dear sister is averse to receiving those attentions Lord Deresford appears inclined to pay her,” returned her brother “ surely she might do this without absolutely shunning him. Take care,” he added smiling, “ whilst wishing to impress upon his Lordship the conviction, he can never be to you more than a common acquaintance, your altered manner does not produce a quite contrary effect, and he may be in reality encouraging those hopes, you

had before described to him." Then observing Lord Deresford was attentively watching them, he addressed some trifling question to him, which was a sufficient excuse for his joining them, when Sophia anxious to convince her brother, she was willing to be beguiled by him, occasionally joined in the conversation.

On arriving in the vicinity of the diary, Captain Rushbrook reminded George of his promise, who instantly flew up the steps for the drawing he had alluded to; but his search was in vain, Sophia acknowledged that she had removed it, but assured her Uncle, she would take an early opportunity of gratifying him with a sight of it.

George shook his head at his sister, but finding his Uncle appeared satisfied with this promise, soon forgot the subject.

The following day, the Miss Deresfords

with their brother joined the Melcombe party in the excursion to——Edward drove Sophia by her particular request, Henry Ainsley persuaded Miss Falconer to trust herself with him in his gig, Charles Warburton accompanied Ellen on horseback, and Lord Deresford drove his own barouch in which were his sisters, Mrs. De Clairville, and Miss Ainsley, George seated himself beside his Lordship on the box, longing to take his place; but finding his mother averse, he desisted from desiring it, notwithstanding he felt convinced he should have made a far better driver than his Lordship, who taking up with continually looking out for the Phaeton, in which was Sophia, he too often forgot what he was about; and had not his companion been on the alert, would more than once have endangered the necks of the ladies committed to his care.

Captain Rushbrook and Mr. De Clair-

ville had preceded the party on horseback, and arrived at the Duke of ——'s noble seat some time before them. Charles and Ellen, on the contrary preferring a road through some beautiful fields, to that the carriages had taken, were so much delighted with their ride, they were not willing to shorten it, by hastening forward, and did not join their friends, till they had seen every thing worthy of notice within doors, and were viewing the pleasure grounds, which were particular fine and picturesque.

On entering the park, George had directed Sophia's attention to a fine old oak ! and enquired if she had not another petition ready to present to its noble owner.

Sophia laughing answered, that as the first had not yet been made any use of, she would send that to the Duke, if any apprehensions were entertained of his cutting down the tree before them.

George then related to the Viscount, the fears entertained by his sisters of the fine oak in his grounds, having been destined to the hammer, and their intention of sending a petition to him, signed by the Warburtons and themselves, for it to be saved from all sacriligious hands.

Lord Deresford happy in having it in his power to evince to Sophia, the influence she had over him, took an early opportunity of assuring her, the tree she had interested herself so much about, should never feel the ax at its roots, though every other in his park were laid low.

She thanked him in the name of her sisters and friends for his promise of sparing it; not allowing him to suppose she attributed his doing so, to her wishes alone.

Lord Deresford was desirous of prevailing upon her, to take George's seat be-

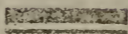
side him, on the barouche box, but finding her Uncle intended driving her back to Melcombe, he dared not urge his wishes: though far from being satisfied with the plan, till the thought occurred to him, could he but induce Edward to take his place, and resign Captain Rushbrook's horse to him, he should then have an opportunity of conversing with Sophia, by keeping up with the phaeton.

Upon mentioning his wishes they were readily complied with; and he had the happiness of engaging as much of her attention, as her Uncle would permit her giving to any one but himself.

Miss Ainsley feeling fatigued by her excursion, was induced to continue in her room the remainder of the day, and when Sophia found the Viscount's attentions, greater than was relished by her, she had an excuse to escape from them, by visiting her invalid friend.

Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville could not remain in ignorance of the conquest their daughter had made of Lord Deresford, and unacquainted with what had lately passed between the former, and Lord d'Arcy, they began to hope she might be induced to listen to his cousin, whose character ranked high in the world, as an excellent landlord, a kind master, and a most affectionate brother.

## CHAP. IX.



Miss Ainsley receiving a letter from her mother, expressing a wish for her return, she endeavoured to prevail upon her brother to accompany her home, which he readily promised after Lady Berwick's visit to Melcombe, who was expected in a few days to call for Miss Falconer on her way to the Land's end. Her Ladyship had consented to spare Annie to Mrs. Ainsley a month at Christmas, which enabled her and Henry to look forward with

some degree of composure to the day, that was so soon to separate them. The last day of her visit to Melcombe was spent at the Priory. Sophia felt little disposed to be of the party ; but recollecting her brother's advice, she prepared to attend her friends to Lord Deresford's, when they and the Marquis of Longueville and his two daughters.

Lady Caroline was in her usual spirits, and soon took an opportunity of enquiring in a low voice, when Sophia had last heard from Lord d'Arcy.

Observing her confusion at the question, she would not press for an answer, but added, " Lucretia is prepared for seeing in you, the woman for whom she was refused ; yet is willing nevertheless to live on amicable terms with you. *Apropos*, did you ever see Sir Henry Singleton, the son of your friend's old Aunt ?",

Sophia wondering what he could possibly have to do with the subject of Lord d'Arcy, said, she had never that pleasure; but confessed she had much regretted his being absent the time she passed in London, as what she had heard of the young Baronet, had greatly prejudiced her in his favor.

“ You do not mean I hope to insinuate,” returned Lady Caroline, “ it is your intention to rival poor Lucretia there too. Take care Miss De Clairville, she does not retaliate upon you, in a manner you are little prepared for.”

Sophia laughing assured her Ladyship, she had no designs of that nature, and as it was very probable Sir Henry and herself might never meet, believed, she might venture to say, she never should entertain any.

In the course of the day Sophia heard

from Lady Caroline that an attachment had subsisted some time between her sister and the young Baronet ; but the embarrassed state of his affairs, had prevented Sir Henry from acknowledging it to the Marquis, who had procured him the situation he was now with such honor filling in India. “ I do not know that I am quite justifiable in letting you into the secrets of my sister,” continued Lady Caroline, “ but I wished you to be thoroughly convinced, she will never be an impediment to your union with Lord d’Arcy, which I am well aware he is looking forward to, if you are not.”

Sophia had before heard from Mrs. Singleton, it was suspected Sir Henry had imbibed an unfortunate attachment for the daughter of his patron; but was till this minute ignorant that the Marquis

of Longueville was the friend in power, who Charlotte then alluded to.

At dinner, Sophia found herself an object of scrutiny to the Marquis, who scarcely withdrew his eyes from her during the meal. Feeling her situation truly embarrassed, she was glad to converse with Lord Deresford next whom he was sitting, who, ignorant of the cause, felt surprised and delighted: his spirits rose in proportion; and he became at once all that was attentive and obliging to those around him,

“What an improvement have your fascinating charms made in the character of our noble host.” whispered Lady Caroline to Sophia. “In general he sits silent, and abstracted; and if I occasionally address a civil speech to him, he answers either yes, or no, exactly in the wrong place, or else with a *hem*, “what was your ladyship observing?”

Lady Caroline's speech was partly overheard by the Viscount, and conscious the remarks she had made upon him were perfectly just, he felt his colour rise, as at the conclusion of it she looked archly towards him.

"Conscience! makes cowards of ~~us~~ us all!" repeated Lady Caroline, enjoying his confusion. "My dear Lord;" she continued, as leaning across Sophia she affected to speak in a low voice, "how long have you sported that blushing complexion? it is really very becoming to you.

"Then why my dear Caroline, are you not more anxious to procure such an one for yourself?" returned her sister, looking a little reproachfully at Lady Caroline, as sitting on the other side of Lord Deresford, she overheard what she had been saying to him.

“I would willingly purchase so fine a bloom dear Lucretia,” she replied, did I know where to procure it. “Perhaps your Lordship,” again turning to Lord Deresford, “will have the kindness to put me in the right way to discover it.”

“I fear my dear Caroline,” cried her father, remarking the increasing confusion of the Viscount, “your spirits are getting the better of your discretion.”

“Not so,” returned Captain Rushbrook, who had gathered sufficient of what was passing at the lower end of the table, to amuse him exceedingly, “Lady Caroline will do us all good; I remember the time when my niece Sophia, had as fine a flow of spirits, as any young creature I know; but they have taken flight, and if her Ladyship can bring them back, I shall scarcely know in what manner to express my gratitude to her.”

“Will you promise me promotion noble Captain?” cried Lady Caroline, laughing, “if I seriously set about searching for these same spirits you are lamenting so much the loss of?”

“My uncle,” said Sophia, trying to rally a remnant of her former liveliness, “can do nothing less, than appoint your Ladyship *Captain’s mate* in the cottage, where he talks of casting anchor for life.”

The laugh was now turned upon Lady Caroline, who declaring Sophia wanted no one’s assistance in searching for what had never been lost, desired Captain Rushbrook before he required her assistance in future, would be quite certain it was really wanted.

Delighted to see Sophia a little like her former self, Captain Rushbrook gave his niece an affectionate pressure of the hand

as she left the dining room, desiring her at the same time, never to let him see her look serious again, when smiles so infinitely more became her.

The evening proved wet, music was proposed, and the Marquis, who was an *amateur* and perfectly master of the science, was charmed with Ellen's performance. Sophia could not be prevailed upon to sing before so large a party, but when reels were proposed, she cheerfully took her seat at the instrument.

The Marquis attached himself to her the whole of the evening ; and when the carriage at a late hour was announced to convey the Melcombe party home, he expressed in the most flattering terms his regret, at losing her so soon.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Marquis of Longueville, and his

daughters, passed a fortnight at the Priory, during which time they saw a great deal of the family at Melcombe, with whom his Lordship was so much charmed, that he warmly pressed them to spend a fortnight at Longueville house, in their way to Glenmore, the seat of Mr. Howard, whom he had learned it was their intention to visit shortly, had Mr. De Clairville felt averse to it, they could scarcely have found it possible to decline accepting so cordial an invitation.

Lord Deresford promised to join his friends, after he had escorted his sisters to Brighton, who were engaged to meet a party there about that time, Sophia earnestly hoped something might occur to detain him, at least till her visit at Longueville was concluded. His attentions became every day more unequivocal, and after the departure of her young friends, and her sister was visiting at Ashmore, she was often under the disagreeable necessity of receiving his visits

alone ; as he gennerally managed to pay them when Mr. De Clairville and his sons were engaged from home.

That his visits were encouraged by her family, Sophia was perfectly aware of ; and again she would endeavour to summons snfficient courage to explain to her mother at least, her present situation with Lord d'Arcy ; but vain as yet, had been every effort for that purpose.

Mrs. De Clairville had heard with concern her daughter and his Lordship had met in London ; for Lady Caroline in a morning visit to Melcombe had unthinkingly enquired whether Sophia had seen Lord d'Arcy since the Marchioness of D—'s ball : and hurt with the silence she had preserved on the subject, which she could only account for, in supposing their meeting had been accidental, Mrs. De Clairville at first purposed questioning So-

phia upon it; but again, hoping her hitherto ingenious child would not much longer continue this reserve, she thought it best to wait, exceedingly wishing her communications might be voluntary.

A few days, previous to that fixed upon for the family's visit into —shire; saw Ellen the wife of Charles Warburton. Sophia now the only daughter left, strove to exert herself, that her mother might less feel the loss of her sisters.

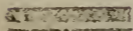
The new married couple immediately after the ceremony, removed to the Vicarage house in the parish where Charles for the present was Curate, and where it was agreed Sophia should join them on her return from Mr. Howards.

It was now the beginning of August, Lady Grace had not written to her friend

since her arrival in France, and Emily in her last letter not having mentioned Lord d'Arcy's name, Sophia was left in uncertainty of his proceedings, though anxiously wishing to know if he was still at Paris, or had accompanied his family across the Alps. Lord Deresford never suffered his cousin's name to pass his lips, and as it was impossible for her to make any enquiries elsewhere, she felt persuaded she must rest contented to remain some time longer in ignorance about him.

Edward had not expressed a wish to hear of Emily since Maria's death ; yet it was evident she was seldom from his thoughts, and when he knew Sophia had received a letter from her, he would find some excuse for remaining in the room, till she had communicated some part of its contents to the family.

## CHAP. X.



The evening preceding the day fixed upon for commencing their journey, Sophia directed her steps to the cottage without the park, on crossing which, she was hailed by her Uncle, as he was returning from a visit he had been paying an old friend in the neighbourhood ; and giving the reins into his servants' hand, he desired him to drive home and inform his brother and sister, he had met with his niece, whom he intended accompanying in her walk.

“ And now my dear Sophia,” he said  
“ allow me to enquire whither you were sailing so fast, when I interrupted your course? ”

Upon finding her errand was one of charity, he expressed a wish to be introduced to her *protoges* ; and drawing her arm within his, he desired her to lead the way to goodman Ashby’s cottage.

On seeing them approach, little William ran out to meet them, and displaying to Sophia’s view, a new spelling book, which had that day been awarded him for his good behaviour, he entreated she would hear him read his lesson in it.

Sophia smiling upon the little fellow, and patting him on the head assured him, she would make a point of doing this another time, but just then she had no leisure to gratify his wish ; then desiring him to

go on as he had begun, promised on her return to Melcombe to give him another book.

William's eyes filled with tears, on finding she was going from home, nor could he be comforted by Captain Rushbrook's assurances that he would bring his dear young lady to visit him, the moment she came back ; but hurrying into the house he hid his face in his mother's apron, and sobbed aloud.

Sophia felt sensibly affected with this proof of his regard, and drawing near him she took the weeping boy from his mother, and placing him on her own knee, soon soothed him into tolerable composure.

She was thus employed, when the door was suddenly opened, and George, followed by Lord Deresford, entered the cottage.

“ My uncle here too ! ” cried the for-

mer, "this is an unexpected pleasure," and he hastened to welcome his return, as his companion at the same moment approached Sophia, who provoked at this interruption, had placed the child on his feet, and risen to leave the cottage.

"I fear we are intruders here," said Lord Deresford observing her hasty movement.

Sophia assured him she was thinking of returning home, as he and her brother entered; and as it was apparent they had business to transact with Mr. Ashby, she would leave them to conclude it; then enquiring if her Uncle was ready to attend her, she took a kind leave of the invalid, in a low voice assuring her, the housekeeper would attend to all her wants, she stopped a moment to kiss little William, who earnestly requested this boon, and was hurrying on, when George calling upon her

to stop, assured her the only business he or his friend had there, was to seek her, whose intention of visiting the cottage they had learned from Mrs. De Clairville.

Never had Lord Deresford seen Sophia appear more lovely, than when caressing the little boy, she had placed on her lap: and observing the colour on her cheek as she returned his compliments, his fear of having offended her by his intrusion vanished, and hope whispered to him the bright bloom, (which in reality had been occasioned by a sensation nearly allied to anger at his unwished for presence,) was caused by a very different sentiment, and as he followed her from the cottage, he secretly determined to seize the first favourable opportunity of coming to an immediate explanation.

“My dear Sophia,” cried her Uncle, as he hastened to overtake her, “what could

possibly induce you to leave the cottage so abruptly ? am I right in suspecting it was George's companion who alarmed you so terribly ? I see no reason for your flying him thus, he seems a worthy young fellow, and loves you I am certain.

“Hush, my dear Uncle,” she returned, “you will certainly be overheard ; ” and fearing he had been so already, as Lord Deresford the next minute joined them. To hide her confusion she turned to her brother, and begging he would walk with her to the dairy, where she had left some drawings, she particularly wished to carry with her to Glenmore, took his arm, and saying they should not be gone five minutes hastened forward.

Captain Rushbrook thinking the young Viscount would prefer accompanying his nephew and niece, to walking with him, advised him to prolong his ramble, and follow

them, but as he began to feel tired, he should prefer returning by the shortest way.

Lord Deresford happy in an excuse for joining Sophia, said, as the evening was so fine, he should be tempted to follow his advice, and in the next minute had overtaken the brother and sister, and authorized his following them, Sophia was obliged to appear satisfied.

On entering the lawn before the dairy house, George suddenly recollected having left some hooks by a trout stream, which he should much want at his brother Howard's, and begging Lord Deressord would take care of his sister home, he ran off to seek them.

So little prepared was Sophia for her brother's desertion. that she continued looking after him for two or three seconds.

Lord Deresford enquiring whether he should seek the drawings she was in quest of, recalled her scattered senses, and gracefully thanking him, as she declined his offer, ran up the flight of steps leading to the apartment she had left them in, and in her hurry to find them that she might return again to her companion, before he could have time to follow her. She at first was not aware of another person being in possession of the little room, till her elder brother's voice enquiring the occasion of her hurried manner discovered it to her.

Much relieved by finding Edward there at the moment she was dreading a *tete a tete* with Lord Deresford; Sophia appeared so more than usually happy, that her brother's curiosity was raised to discover what had produced this instantaneous effect, when sportively placing her finger on her lips, she pointed to the door at which she had entered, and the next moment her

companion made his appearance at it, whose countenance plainly shewed the mortification, he felt at seeing a third person present, when he had flattered himself the time was arrived in which, he could put the meditated design of explaining himself to Sophia.

Edward could scarcely suppress a smile, as he advanced to meet the disappointed lover, whilst Sophie was collecting together her drawing materials, which being soon accomplished, he proposed their return to the house.

Lord Derssford would then have taken leave, but was requested by De Clairville not to think of quitting Melcombe that evening, as the clouds had every appearance of a storm.

His Lordship did not require much pressing but very composedly followed his com-

panions to the drawing room, where Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville, with Captain Rushbrook were sitting.

“Where is George?” was the first enquiry made by the latter. Hearing he had left his companions to seek his fishing tackle, Sophia saw her Uncle direct an arch glance towards her, and suspecting, from the observations he had made, as they left the cottage, he believed her avoidance of the Viscount, was dictated alone by a spirit of coquetry, she determined upon undeceiving him as soon as possible.

The storm which Edward had predicted now came on, and as he approached to shut the windows, which had been left open from the closeness of the night, George presented himself at one of them. Mrs. De Clairville much alarmed at finding he had been exposed to a heavy rain, entreated, he would

hasten to change his cloths, desiring him to recollect his brother's late severe illness, had been occasioned by similar carelessness. George assured his mother he would comply with her wishes. "But first let me inform you," he added, "there is one arrived who appears an equal sufferer with myself," and saying this he scampered off to gain admittance at the first entrance. "Surely it cannot be a messenger of ill tidings from my Ellen," said Mrs. De Clairville, as her husband and son left the room, to make enquiries after the stranger just arrived.

How can you my dear sister give way to such evil presentiments, "cried Captain Rushbrook." It is far more likely to prove another sweetheart of Sophia's who hearing of her being upon the point of leaving Melcombe, comes to take a last farewell. Have I not guessed right my sweet love? and are you not expecting a

visitor of this description “ Indeed, I am not ; ” she returned, blushing a little at observing Lord Deresford earnestly regarding her. “ But here comes my father, he will inform us, who this unexpected guest proves to be.”

Mr. De Clairville soon calmed the apprehension of his wife, by naming Clement Warburton, who, learning at Ashmore the family were to commence their journey into——shire early the following morning, had good naturedly ridden over to Melcombe to deliver to Sophia a letter he was the bearer of, from his sister Charlotte.

“ Clement’s knight-errantry,” continued Mr. De Clairville, “ would not allow him to turn back, notwithstanding the storm overtook him scarcely a mile from Ashmore ; I have left him under the care of Morris, and if she permits the poor fel-

low to escape her you will see him at supper. Here is the letter my dear Sophia that your knight has encountered such perils to deliver safe into your hands.

Sophia eagerly held out her hand for it, which her Uncle observing, maliciously extended one of his at the same time, and seizing the precious paper held it high above his head, he would not part with it till she had given him a kiss, Lord Deresford's absense alone prevented her gaining her letter on such easy terms, but perceiving he was enjoying the scene, she effected to appear very indifferent whether she received it or not, and seating herself at the instrument, began to play a little air which was a favorite of her Uncle's, hoping it would engage his attention and take it from the letter he still held in his hand. But suspecting her design, Captain Rushbrook told her, as he had a little curiosity to learn the contents of her friend's

epistle, he hoped she would permit him to gratify it, pretending to break the seal.

Sophia in alarm lest it should be broken in reality, intreated him so earnestly to give up his intention, that unwilling to continue a joke, which evidently made his darling niece uncomfortable, he threw his arm round her, and drawing her out of the room, told her when they arrived in the hall, that as he saw her modesty was too great to salute her old Uncle before her lover he had taken this method to procure his reward, which till he had obtained, his honor would not allow of his parting with her letter. “Are you then,” he laughingly continued, “disposed to release it on my terms.

Sophia’s only answer, was by throwing herself into her Uncle’s arms who affectionately kissing her, restored the letter desiring her to hasten to read it, and re-

turn as soon as possible to the drawing room. Promising not to be more than ten minutes, Sophia left him, and hurrying to her apartment, eagerly broke the seal of her friends letter, hoping it contained some intelligence of the Montreuil family, nor was she disappointed, Charlotte wrote she had lately become acquainted with a gentleman who was just arrived from Paris, and had been often in company with Lord d'Arcy there. From this gentleman she had learned, Lord Montreuil proceeded almost immediately with his family to Italy, where resided an old intimate friend of the Earl's he had not seen for many years ; and with whom he intended making some stay.

“ You will believe my dear Sophia,” continued Mrs. Singleton in her letter, I did not part with Mr. Evans till I had gathered all the information from him, he was able to give me of your friends. Hap-

pily, he was as willing to satisfy my enquiries, as I was eager to hear all he had to say. Lord d'Arcy has been ill, but was almost convalescent when he accompanied his family to Italy, and the salubrious air of that Country will I trust soon restore him to his former health, I am at a loss to account for Lady Grace's silence, unless the haughty Norman, (as Lady Caroline styles Lord Montreuil) has prohibited her writing; yet in that case, you would have heard from the Marquis, who I understand is of their party. At Longeville, it is possible you may learn more particulars, as d'Arcy castle is not many miles from thence, and if you have so much taste for antique buildings, I earnestly recommend your visiting that venerable pile, you may then perhaps hear of the family from the old house-keeper, who is I am told of almost equal antiquity with the castle.

“I long exceedingly to hear of Emily's

return, and that the meeting between her and Edward had taken place. If you neglect to send me a faithful account of all that passes when this happens, I shall no longer wish you may see a certain Lord return to England the mirror of constancy, you now expect."

Sophia had finished reading her friend's letter, and forgetting her promise to return to her uncle, as soon as she had done this, was sitting disconsolately, her head resting upon her hand, with the open letter upon the table, conjuring up a thousand terrible ideas of the probable termination of Lord d'Arcy's illness, when her mother wondering, what had detained her so long, came to seek her.

Sophia in some confusion, at being thus found, hastily arose; and in an unsteady voice enquired, if Clement War-

burton had yet joined the party in the drawing room.

“He has,” replied Mrs. De Clairville, “and was enquiring for you as I left the room to seek the truant, apprehensive my dear Sophia you were not well, but it appears my alarm was groundless, and your stay was voluntary.”

Sophia observing her mother’s eyes glance towards the open letter on the table, said in yet greater confusion, “Did not my uncle tell you I had retired to read Charlotte’s letter?”

“From Charlotte is it?” returned Mrs. de Clairville, gravely, “excuse me Sophia, but I believed it to be from ————”

“From whom my dear mother?”

“Lord d’Arcy.”

Sophia's eyes bent under the searching ones of her mother, as the latter said this, her colour varied from red to pale a dozen times in the course of a few seconds, and in vain she attempted to speak, till perceiving Mrs. de Clairville was preparing to leave her, she started, and rushing forwards, threw her arms around her to detain her, and burst into tears. As soon as she had recovered sufficient composure to make herself understood, Sophia implored her respected parent not to leave her, till she had heard all that she had to say. "If you cannot do this now," she continued, "suffer me my dearest mother to attend you after supper to your dressing room; and when your Sophia's heart is laid open to your inspection, I trust, you will pity, as much as you will condemn her."

"My child," said Mrs. De Clairville, as she warmly returned the embrace of her

daughter, " must voluntarily give me her confidence or not at all.

" It will indeed be voluntarily," Sophia replied. " As by opening my heart to you my dear mother, it will be relieved of a burden almost too heavy to be supported. When you know all, I shall, I hope, feel happier, far happier than I have done for many weeks."

" Compose yourself my love," said Mrs. De Clairville, as she again pressed her daughter to her maternal bosom, " Our journey to-morrow, will be an excuse for retiring earlier than usual, and I will, before I think of rest, hear all my Sophia has to tell me."

Sophia, fearful the little composure she had tried to attain, would desert her, did she attempt answering her beloved mother, followed her in silence down the stairs, at

## MELCOMBE LODGE,

the foot of which they were met by Capt. Rushbrook, who was coming he said, to seek his niece.

“ You little runaway,” he cried catching Sophia in his arms, as he spoke, “ I have a great mind to punish you for this desertion. Did you not promise me to return in ten minutes, when your absence has been prolonged more than three times that time. Had the letter you were so eager to obtain, been from a correspondent of the other sex, I might have found some excuse for you, but perhaps,” he added, “ it was only an envelope to another still more precious epistle. Am I right.”

“ I believe, I can answer, you are not,” said his sister smiling : “ But as I was in some measure the cause of Sophia’s breaking her word with you, I hope you will overlook her offence this time, and accompany us in amnesty to the supper room.”

With a little difficulty Mrs. De Clairville succeeded in her design of releasing her daughter from her Uncle's raillery, and the next minute the drawing room door opened, and Clement Warburton came forward to shake hands with Sophia.

Clement had many kind messages to deliver to her from the family in Upper Seymour street, and Sophia had the pleasure of hearing his sister Eliza, was entirely divested of her late affectation, and that Colonel Marsden was her declared admirer.

Sophia did not forget to enquire after Clement's friend Mr. Leigh ; and learned, he was at that time in Paris, with his constant companion Lord William ——— who evidently tolerated him only for the convenience of his purse.

Mrs. De Clairville, soon after supper, apologising to her visitors for retiring so

early, making the journey on the morrow her excuse, left the gentlemen, accompanied by her daughter, and repairing to her dressing room, gave the latter the desired opportunity of unburdening her mind to her mother.

Sophia related her unexpected meeting with Lord d'Arcy at Richmond ; his accompanying herself and friends to Lady D——'s, and all that had passed between them afterwards in Seymour street.

Mrs. De Clairville could scarcely blame, though she deeply lamented the engagement her daughter had entered into for a twelvemonth, and she again set before her the little prospect, there was of the Earl's ever being induced to part with his prejudices, and give his sanction to their union ; and the misery that must follow her entering into a family, the head of which would

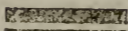
never acknowledge her as the wife of his son.

Sophia assured her mother, nothing should ever induce her to become the wife of Lord d'Arcy without the full concurrence of his father, and of that ever being obtained, she was as hopeless as herself. "Be not however apprehensive for me, my dear mother;" she continued, "I am striving daily to forget such things were, and is at present most dear to me: and now, that my mind is easier from having opened my heart to you, and received your forgiveness for my late reserve, you will I trust, henceforth find me all you could wish; and in studying to make the happiness of those around me, shall, I hope soon recover my own."

Mrs De Clairville sighed, as she tenderly kissed her child before she parted with her for the night; fearing her peace of mind was irrecoverably gone, and feel-

ing angry with Lord d'Arcy as the cause of this, was less inclined to pardon his conduct in Town, which she thought had been selfish in the extreme. Mr. De Clairville was made acquainted with the particulars of the conversation that had been passing between his wife and daughter. He lamented as much as the former the engagement their daughter had entered into, but looked forward with more hope than Mrs De Clairville, to the time Sophia would be released from it, thinking it not improbable that she might then be induced to listen to Lord Deresford, whose attachment to her, could not for a moment be doubted.

## CHAP. XI.



The following morning the Melcombe family began their journey into ——shire. Lord Deresford and Clement Warburton partook of an early breakfast with the travellers, and then departed each to his own home.

Sophia felt in better spirits than she had done for some time ; the day was fine, the country through which they passed was beautiful, every thing favoured her return-

ing cheerfulness, and she was surprized to find herself return with some of her former spirit, her Uncle's raillery, which was now called forth by her parting from Lord Deresford; to whom he believed her seriously attached. Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville, perceiving with delight this change in their beloved child, promoted the mirth going forward, and when the little party stopped for the night at — so little inclined were they to rest, that taking advantage of a fine moon, they rambled about the Town for an hour or two before supper. The next morning found them little fatigued with the long journey of the preceding day, and anxious to proceed. Harvest had been some time began; the fields were every where filled with labourers applying the sickle to the corn. To Captain Rushbrook, who had passed the last twenty years at sea, this was comparatively a novel scene, and though much attached to his profession, he expressed the hope that he might always

have it in his power to visit the country at that season of the year, when the husbandman was reaping the good effects of his toil.

Some time before the travelers reached the end of their journey, they discerned the turrets of an old castle, rearing its head above the woods that surrounded it. Sophia's heart had already told her it was the seat of the Montreuil family; and her father's answer to the enquiry made by her Uncle, proved her conjectures had not been erroneous.

"I should like exceedingly to pay that ancient edifice a visit;" said Captain Rushbrook; "as since I was in the North of Wales, I have not seen any thing so much resembling an old Castle. It cannot, I should think be more than six miles from the post, to which we are now directing our course."

“I surveyed it, some year since,” said Mr. De Clairville. “Many of the apartments are left as they were furnished some centuries back; but the principal rooms, are fitted up in a modern style. There are also some fine paintings in it particularly worthy of attention.”

“We will then certainly pay it a visit,” cried Captain Rushbrook. “What say you to accompany me thither my dearest love, addressing Sophia.”

Sophia assured him it would give her great pleasure to be his companion, as nothing she more enjoyed than rambling over old buildings, particularly those where there were tapestry rooms, and sliding panels.

Her father laughing assured her, if such was her taste, she would not be disappointed in the castle they had lately passed, as there was one wing of it, which was not

merely furnished with what she alluded to, but with trap doors innumerable.

Mrs. De Clairville said, her curiosity was equally great to view this antique castle, as either her brother's or Sophia's; and added, she should certainly request to be one of the party, who visited it from Longueville.

Soon after this conversation had passed, the carriage entered by a handsome Lodge the park belonging to Longueville house. It appeared of great extent, but far too flat for Sophia to be charmed with. There was another great defect, she thought that it wanted water. "How infinitely I prefer our own park to this," she exclaimed looking around her. "Here are no beautiful inequalities of ground. The trees are to be sure fine, but compared with those around us, they sink into nothing."

“ With my Lord Deresford’s oaks and lake for instance,” observed her Uncle archly.

“ With his, if you please,” she laughingly returned. “ How very far superior is his with that beautiful lake, to this extensive park without any water to be seen in it.”

Captain Rushbrook assured his niece, the Viscount should soon be gratified by learning her approbation of his demesnes. He was prevented saying more by the carriage driving through another gate, which brought them in sight of the house ; and a modern mansion forming a striking contrast to the old castle, they had lately passed.

The Marquis and his daughters met them in the vestibule, and conducted them to the saloon, where were assembled se-

veral friends of the family, at that time visitors in the house. Mrs. De Clairville and her daughter were not allowed to make any alteration in their dress that evening, but Sophia wishing to take off her hat, Lady Caroline offered to accompany her to the apartment.

Whilst there, she informed her friend their party had been augmented the day before, by the arrival of her brother and a friend of his. "Edgell," continued her Ladyship, "has been absent the last two years: and is lately arrived from Italy, but I do not think he saw any thing of Lord d'Arcy whilst he was there. What at your old habit of blushing; my dear Miss De Clairville, will you never leave off that unfashionable trick? We will drop his Lordship then," she added smiling, "and proceed to other subjects. This brother of ours is very handsome, and it is our desire you should fall desperate in love with

him, but leave his friend, (who though not so handsome as Seymore is nevertheless very agreeable,) for others to captivate."

"Surely your brother, my dear Lady Caroline, was not in the saloon when we entered it?" said Sophia.

"I hope you have not pictured him to yourself like one of the grave old Don's you saw there," returned her friend laughing. "Edgell, I suspect," unconscious as he appears to be of his personal attractions, would not exceedingly relish being mistaken by you for a man of his father's understanding. But if you are ready, we will return to the company, where I hope to find both my brother and his friend, who have been dining from home, fully intended returning this evening."

On Sophia's entering the saloon, the Marquis approached her with an elegant

young man, whom he introduced to her as his son. Lord Edgell soon entering into conversation with her, she found him perfectly unaffected, and very pleasant; apparently anxious to pay her every attention as a friend of his sisters. Mr. Cecil, Lord Edgell's friend, was lively and entertaining, and mutually pleased with each other, the party did not separate till a very late hour, when it was settled that the following day should be devoted to visiting d'Arcy castle, which Captain Rushbrook had expressed a great desire to go over.

Sophia was awakened the next morning by the voice of Lady Caroline at the door requesting admittance. "You look surprised my dear Miss De Clairville," she cried "at seeing one thus early dressed, having heard such terrible accounts of my laziness from Lucretia, but when any thing which interests me is going forwards, I can rise as well as other people. At this

there is something that particularly calls my attention, as I am engaged in superintending the workmen who are employed in raising a temporary ball room, which is intended to be made use of next week, when my brother comes of age, and whilst my sister is giving all necessary directions to the housekeeper, I am permitted to indulge myself in every thing without doors, as the *fete* by my particular desire will be given in the grounds. Will you then, “continued Lady Caroline,” hasten my dear friend to dress, and accompany me in the round I now regularly take before breakfast- I am anxious to hear your opinion upon what is done, and hope for your assistance in what is yet left to do.”

Sophia promised to render her all the service in her power; and instantly rising was soon ready to accompany her Ladyship to the spot where the workmen were

briskly engaged about the intended ball room.

After a little consultation, it was agreed to devote the next day to tying up the artificial flowers, Lady Caroline had prepared for the occasion ; and with the assistance of the gentlemen, they hoped to arrange the wreaths to their satisfaction. The conservatory was fixed upon for the supper room on the gala night, and ordered to be cleared of its plants for that purpose.

Lady Caroline had requested her father to allow of Booths being erected under the lime tree walk, and furnishing them with the manufacturers from the neighbouring towns, but finding him averse to the plan, she instantly gave it up, and only requested in return for having so willingly relinquished it, to have the intended *cejune* changed into an evening *fete*. This the Marquis readily consented to, and the avenue,

which had been intended by his daughter to represent a fair, was now to be illuminated with coloured lamps interspersed between the trees, behind which were to be concealed a fine band engaged for the occasion.

All these particulars, Sophia learned from her companion, as they were returning to the house. The next moment Lady Caroline observing the postman crossing the park, enquired whether her friend expected letters, and hearing she did, her Ladyship proceeded straight to the breakfast room, and ordered the letter bag to be sent to her.

Sophia on leaving Melcombe had given strict charge, that all letters arriving in the absence of the family, should be forwarded immediately, still retaining some hope of hearing soon from Lady Grace; and she now waited with some impatience her companion's opening the bag.

“ Upon my word,” said Lady Caroline laughing, “ my Lord Marquis will find this rather an expensive morning to him. Observe Sophia,” she continued, “ the number of letters contained in this case all directed under cover to him, when one third of them he has no concern in.”

“ Then I fear,” said Sophia, “ there is not any for me: as my father always makes a point of his letters being addressed to himself, wherever he is staying.

“ I have heard this before,” returned Lady Caroline, blushing a little for having been so ungarded.” I should not have ventured the remark, I did a minute since. But do not look so disappointed, there is no occasion for your doing so, as I have found two letters addressed to Miss Sophia De Clairville, and both have foreign post marks.”

Sophia eagerly seized upon them, and glancing her eyes over the direction of the first, she saw it was written by the Marquis of Ormondsty.

Anxious to become acquainted with its contents, but not daring to break the seal till she was alone, Sophia prepared to open her other letter, which was from Emily: when at that instant Lady Caroline observing her brother and Mr. Cecil were walking on the lawn before the house, calling to her friend to follow, she darted through the opened sash, but Sophia instead of doing this, took the opportunity of returning to her own apartment, when bolting the door to prevent intrusion, she hastily opened the letter from Italy, and found it written, as she expected by Lady Grace.

It began with complaining of her silence, and Sophia found her Ladyship had writ-

ten several letters, not one of which had yet reached her. The one, she was now reading, was certainly a sequel to the last that had been sent to England, in which Lady Grace had described the effect produced upon her in crossing the Alps. "My brother," she continued "is recovering, but slowly, we hoped the genial air of this sweet climate, would have been more beneficial to him, then it has proved; but I doubt my Sophia, he languishes for his native soil." Lady Grace then proceeded to confess her knowledge of Lord d'Arcy's attachment to her friend, and her regret at there being any impediment to its proving a happy one. Her father's prejudices, she slightly touched upon, apologizing for them, by the manner he had been educated. "But there are many good points about papa," she continued, notwithstanding his errors; and sometimes I feel assured that he is hurt with himself, when he sees poor Arther look so very miserable. In-

deed, Ormondsty tells me, he is never alone with my father, that the latter does not in some way or other, introduce your family into their conversation. and once the Marquis heard him express the regret he felt, at your grandfather's having ever connected himself with trade, and this appears is the difficulty to be surmounted, before he can give his consent to my brother's marrying into your family. Such is the force of early prejudice.

“ I have no fear my dear Sophia, of your forgetting Arther, or I would entreat you not on any account to be induced to listen to the addresses of any other man, till my brother's return to England ; when my heart whispers me, all will end well. At present we are inmates in the elegant Villa of the Marchese di Rosalvi, an old and esteemed friend of papa's The Marchese lost his wife several years back.

One daughter alone remains of a numerous family, who all died in infancy. Lady Laurina is almost idolized by her father, and indulged by him in every wish ; but happily she is not to be spoiled. There is something indescribably fascinating about this young creature, who is scarcely sixteen. She has been educated under the eye of her maternal Aunt, the Signora della Florina; who, since her sister's death, has resided constantly with her brother. The Signora is reserved in her manners to strangers, but we had not been two days in her company, before this lessened very much ; and, at the end of the week, no traces remained of it."

My dear mother is quite charmed with her new friend, with whom she generally passes her mornings, whilst Laurina kindly gives me lessons in Italian, or on the harp, which she is perfect mistress of. Her voice is sweeter than I can describe and has

been, you may believe highly cultivated. Ormondsty and my brother sometimes assist at our little concerts, Laurina compliments the latter on his style of singing, and says, she never heard but one gentleman excel him. I hope my dear Sophia will become acquainted with this charming Italian, as the Marchese has half promised to return with us. Laurina is wild with delight at the thoughts of visiting England: she loves all the English, and declares if she ever marries, her husband shall be of that nation.

Laurina has in her possession a beautiful little gold heart, in which is enclosed a lock of hair, and on the back of it, in small letters are engraved "*Do not forget me.*" My curiosity to learn the name of my countryman, who presented her with his memento, has not been gratified. She will only tell me, it was the gift of a very dear friend, and that no one has seen it,

but myself and her Aunt, who knows and esteems the giver. The colour of the hair resembles Arthur's, but his, it certainly cannot be. I have never heard of another English family, besides ours that ever visited at the Villa, and probably may never learn the name of him, whose memory is evidently cherished by the youthful Laurina.

Lady Grace after describing the scenery around the villa, the company that visited there, and several of the characters who made a part of it, concluded her letter with saying how happy it would make her to see her friend again, which time she trusted, was not far distant. Sophia was summoned to breakfast, before she had time to read her other letter, but expecting to be questioned upon its contents, she hastily ran it over as she descended the stairs, and had made out that her Uncle and cousin would soon be at Woodley, as she entered the breakfast room.

“ I find my love,” said her mother a few minutes after her entrance, “ you have heard from France. When are we to expect my brother and Emily back ? ”

“ Very soon I hope,” Sophia replied.

“ Have they then fixed any time for leaving Paris ? ”

Sophia, ashamed to confess she did not know, produced her cousin's letter, and put it into her mother's hands.

Mrs. De Clairville had not finished the first line, then turning to her daughter she said. “ You intended me to find an agreeable surprise, and it has indeed proved such. My brother and niece,” she continued addressing Mr. De Clairville and Captain Rushbrook, “ have not merely fixed their time for leaving Paris, but are at this present moment on their return to England.”

“My brother and Emily on their return home!” exclaimed Captain Rushbrook. “Why you little rogue Sophia,” he continued, his countenance animated with the delight this intelligence gave him. “How could you keep me an instant ignorant of such good news,”

Edward, who was taking a cup of coffee from Lady Lucretia, found on a sudden his hand so unsteady that it was with some difficulty he conveyed it to its place, without spilling more than half of it, but happily the attention of the company was attracted to his mother, who was reading part of Emily’s letter aloud, and his agitation remained unnoticed.

The Marquis expressed his hopes, that Sir Charles and his daughter, might be prevailed upon to join their party, and proposed sending an invitation immediately to Woodley : but it was Mrs. De Clairville’s

opinion, her brother would find too much to occupy his time at home, to be able to leave it so soon after his return, and the Marquis, not wishing his invitation to be considered as merely complimentary, desisted from his design of sending it.

The party soon retired to prepare for their intended excursion, when Sophia put into her mother's hands the letter, she had received from Lady Grace.

“ This young Italian,” observed Mrs. De Clairville, as she returned the letter to her daughter, “ appears to have completely fascinated your friend. [I remember hearing of the Marchese's visit to this kingdom some years back, and that his lady was considered the most beautiful woman at court, where she was introduced by Lady Montreuil. The Marchesa's picture, was to be seen in every print shop in

Town, and if it resembled her, she must have been very handsome."

"I hope we shall have an opportunity of seeing her daughter, during her stay in England," said Sophia blushing as she spoke.

"I think there is no chance of this," replied Mrs. De Clairville, concerned to perceive her daughter's hopes of Lord Montreuil's changing his sentiments, had been raised by her unguarded friend." It is not probable the Earl will visit his nephew, and even if he did, we could not call at the Priory, whilst he or his family were its guests.

Sophia sighed, but answered not, and the next moment left the room to prepare for her ride.

Lord Edgell had proposed accompany-

ing Lady Caroline and herself on horseback. As they were mounting, Mr. Cecil made his appearance on a noble steed, declaring his intention was not to lose sight of so pleasant a party. The rest of the party in barouches or phaetons, had driven from the house some minutes before.

Sophia was much pleased with her companions, (for Lady Caroline, and Mr. Cecil had left her to a *tete a tete* with Lord Edgell.) He recited several anecdotes, he had heard of the ancestors of Lord Montreuil.

The castle, they were approaching, he told her was supposed to have been presented to the Montreuil family, as a mark of royal favor, by the Norman conqueror, it had the appearance, Sophia thought as she drew nearer it, of having been continually added to since that time, as the greater part of it, was not only in tolera-

ble repair, but the architecture was of a far later date. It stood upon an eminence that overlooked the country for many miles. A gentle ascent led to a fine old gateway, which she stopped some time to admire. Lord Edgell pointed out to her the room where the warder once was stationed, which even at that time remained almost entire. This gate led into a large court; opposite was the grand entrance to the house. On one side was the chapel, whose painted windows, reflecting the sun's rays in a thousand different colours, had a most beautiful effect. The buildings on the other side the court, which had in former times been set apart for the reception of travellers, accidentally requiring a night's lodging, which was seldom refused them, were now devoted to menial offices. The house itself appeared of vast extent: in every respect similar to other castles, but as Sophia had never before seen one of such ancient structure, she could not suf-

ficiently express the pleasure, she felt at having had it in her power to visit it.

George met his sister and Lord Edgell at the grand entrance; and desiring them to follow him, he led the way up a magnificent stair case, though an extensive gallery terminated by large folding doors, at this time thrown back for the strangers to pass through, who were curious to view the more ancient apartments of the castle; and here Sophia found the rest of the party.

The suite of rooms to which they led, was hung with tapestry, representing historical pieces: the colours were still fine, and Sophia would have found much pleasure in tracing the histories, they were intended to represent, had her younger brother permitted it; but he was so very earnest with her, to accompany him through the rest of the apart-

ments, she found it impossible to refuse obliging him.

George soon discovered a sliding panel, that opened into a dark narrow passage, which his sister begged to be excused exploring it. But Lady Caroline laughing at her fears, assured her she might safely venture, as it led to a gallery in the east wing of the castle, where Lord Montreuil's ancestors from the first century she believed still hung.

Sophia feeling a little curiosity to see such antiques, no longer hesitated to follow her brother, and after groping their way a few seconds, they found a door which opened into the gallery Lady Caroline mentioned, and where the rest of the company by a less intricate way, had arrived before them.

At the upper end of it hung William, the

conquerer and his concert. Sophia was charmed with the representation of Matilda. She was dressed in a girdle and mantle, and on her head a diadem, similar to that of her husband's, which was ornamented with trefoils. From the under part of this hung a veil, which fell carelessly behind her shoulders. In her right hand was a sceptre, surmounted with a fleur de Lys, and in her left, a book. Her feet were supported by the figure of a lion.

I wish Eliza Warburton was here, cried George, "we should soon see her dressed with the same style, her Majesty has displayed in her choice of ornaments."

"You appear to have forgotten my dear brother," said his sister, "that Eliza has laid aside her late affected style of dressing and will no longer amuse you by her eccentricities in this respect."

“ So much the worse,” he replied. “ I shall lose half my sport if this is the case.”

“ I have heard Lord Montreuil boast,” said the Marquis, “ that this gallery contains his ancestors from the conquest down to the reign of our second James.”

“ To an antiquary, it must be a high treat to take a view of this curious assemblage of both sexes,” observed Mr. De Clairville. “ The dresses of the different periods, the originals lived in, are certainly very curious.” He then pointed out some beautiful women, but whose dresses strangely disfigured them.

“ The extravagances of both sexes, and of all ranks, have been a subject of complaint in every age,” remarked a gentleman present. “ I think Henry in his English history, describes some of the most ludicrous hints that can possibly be conceived.”

“Would the ladies of our day,” said Mr. Edgell, “rest satisfied with the simple manner of adorning themselves, they of late have adopted, instead of running after french fashions and frippery, which is now so much the rage, how infinitely more lovely, they would appear in our eyes, and in those of every other nation.”

“Never let me see you, my dear niece,” cried Captain Rushbrook, “imitating French fashions. I hate every thing that is French; they are all a set of rascals, and, I will never believe we can be long at peace with them. So my sweet Sophia do not, as I said before, ever allow me to see you dressed like one of that nation.”

Sophia laughing, readily promised her Uncle she would be very careful of introducing any of their fashions whilst he was at Melcombe; and as she had almost an equal dislike with himself to the style of

dress the french ladies had adopted, she might safely assure him, he had no occasion to entertain any apprehensions of seeing her following their example in that respect.

After walking through the different apartments above, the family descended to the hall, which was hung round with many an ancient trophy. Those rooms, generally inhabited by the family, had been newly furnished, and added elegance, to comfort.

The apartments, appropriated to Lord d'Arcy and his sister, were approached by Sophia, with feelings impossible to describe. In Lady Grace's dressing room, hung a pourtrait of her brother, taken when a youth. Lady Caroline enquired whether Sophia did not trace a greater resemblance in this to the young lord, than in that, which had appeared at the Exhibition in the spring.

Sophia observing the eyes of the Marquis were fixed upon her, as his daughter addressed this question to her, returned a careless answer to her ladyship, which much offended her brother George, who after expressing his astonishment. at any one, looking with indifference on such a figure as Lord d'Arcy's, added, "I am more surprized at Sophia's doing this, as it is not many months since she confessed my friend was very handsome."

"Are you quite sure, you are correct George, in what you are asserting?" said Lady Caroline, looking archly at Sophia as she spoke, whose blushes, betrayed her, and convinced them her brother was perfectly right in what he had advanced. "I never recollect having heard your sister, express any *particular* admiration of the personal charms of this young nobleman."

"My Lord d'Arcy," said the house-

keeper, somewhat piqued at her young lord being thought so little of, as Lady Caroline's speech seemed to imply, "Is generally thought very handsome, and he is quite as good as he looks."

"When do you expect the family to return?" enquired Mr. De Clairville; anxious to divert the attention of the party, from the blushing countenance of his daughter.

"The steward received a letter from my lord this morning sir," returned Mrs. Mason, in which he desired us to be prepared for seeing him sooner than was first thought of: and he likewise mentioned, that a noble family from Italy, would return with him to England."

"Did the Earl also mention the name of this family," enquired Lord Edgell.

"I really do not know my lord, but if

Mr. Serle is in the way he can inform you."

"It is not of the least consequence," he returned, as my question was merely prompted by curiosity."

"You have I find been lately in Italy my lord," said Mr. De Clairville. "In what parts were you most stationary?"

"In the vicinity of Naples. My anxiety to visit Rome, was great; which the unsettled state of the continent gave me little hopes of doing. I was with my tutor, in the mediterranean, when the joyful news reached us, that the barrier was at length removed to our visiting a country, we had so earnestly wished to see and ——"

Lord Edgell was prevented proceeding by George's calling his attention to a fine picture that hung in an adjoining room,

the subject of which, he was a stranger to. His lordship having good humouredly explained it to him, attended the party to the Chapel, and afterwards to the grounds, which were of great extent. He led the way to an elevated part of them, from whence the castle with its moat and draw-bridge, were seen to most advantage.

“ I must confess,” cried Lady Caroline, who had followed her brother and Sophia to this spot, “ I prefer the modern structure of Longuiville, infinitely to the ancient edifice before us. To me, there is little beauty in those walls blackened by age. Tell me honestly dear Sophia, if you see any thing particular in them, or in those moss crowned turrets? ”

“ I heard Miss De Clairville remark as we rode hither,” returned her brother, “ she always approached an old building, even one of much later structure than this, with

sensations of awe, impossible to describe."

"With no pleasurable ones I indeed believe," said his sister laughing, "at least I am sure, were I condemned to pass my life within the walls of d'Arcy castle, I should soon loose all my spirits. The woods around it, inspire gloomy ideas. Whoever marries the hier, will I hope persuade him to pull down the greater part of it, cut down the old trees, and plant others of a less sombre appearance, what say you Sophia to this? Will you propose to Lord d'Arcy, some future day?"

"Your Ladyship," she answered colouring highly, "will I have no doubt, have more opportunities for proposing such alterations to him, than it is probable I shall ever have."

"My dear Caroline," said her brother, "when shall I see you —"

“ Like Miss De Clairville. Is not that what you were going to say ? Perhaps my dear Seymour you are not aware, this same Miss De Clairville, was, scarcely a twelvemonth since not much unlike your giddy sister: at least, I heard Miss Rushbrook describe her at the time I allude to, as all life and spirits, who knows,” she continued, affecting to sigh deeply, “ that another twelvemonth may not make as great an alteration in me.

Sophia still more confused, felt greatly relieved by the appearance of Mr. Cecil and her eldest brother, who came to inform them the rest of the party were preparing to return home.

Lord Edgell was again left to entertain Sophia on their way back ; as Mr Cecil and Lady Caroline were soon out of sight: Feeling excessively hurt at her sister's inattention to propriety, he could not forbear

lamenting it to Sophia. "Never," he proceeded, "did any young creature more want a mother's eye constantly watching over her than poor Caroline does. My father idolizing his children, has indulged us from our infancy. Lucretia has happily escaped being spoiled; but her sister is like a colt untamed. Could she for some time be under the care of such a superior woman as your excellent mother, my dear Miss De Clairville, I might feel some hope of her improvement. But now, with many excellent points about her, I am apprehensive of her ungovernable spirit continually leading her astray."

"My mother would I am sure, receive the greatest gratification in being of any use to Lady Caroline," returned Sophia. "But to me, the latter appears only to want a friend to correct those little exuberances of spirit; one whom she respects, as much as loves, and pardon my observing,

where can she find a better friend than in her brother.”

“ You think it then possible,” said Lord Edgell evidently gratified, by her having so high an opinion of him. “ I may be of some use to my sister ?”

“ I have an elder brother my Lord,” returned Sophia ; “ to him I often apply for counsel; and had it been my misfortune to have lost my parents, to whom would I have looked up, but to him. As it is, I find him next to them, my best friend. To Edward, I am indebted for many improvements I have made in several of my pursuits, and when my spirits, like Lady Caroline’s, have been on the point of carrying away my discretion, a look from him has restrained them.”

“ You have given me a strong stimulus my dear Miss De Clairville,” cried Lord Edgell smiling, “ to tempt me to try my influence over my sister. To see her in any respect resembling her friend, will re-

compense me for all the difficulties I must expect to meet with in accomplishing my wishes."

Lady Caroline was the next minute seen with her companion entering the Park gate, from which her brother and Sophia were not twenty yards distant. Her Ladyship discovering their vicinity, waited their approach. "We have had a most delightful ride," she cried; why did you not follow our lead, instead of returning by the same road, you set out by."

"You allowed us no opportunity of doing this," her brother gravely replied, "as neither Miss De Clairville, nor I could possibly be aware it was your intention to take another way home."

"Indeed I believe you are right," Lady Caroline returned a little disconcerted. I certainly ought to have apprized you of our intention. But do not look so very serious my dear Seymore, or I shall think you are indeed angry with me."

“ I trust then, my dear sister, will not again give me any cause for appearing so,” he replied extending his hand to her, which was tenderly pressed by Lady Caroline.

Mr. Cecil, riding the rest of the way by the side of Sophia, gave Lord Edgell an opportunity of intimating to his sister the impropriety she had been guilty of, in leaving her friend to ride alone with a gentleman, whose name she was even unacquainted, with not two days since.

Lady Caroline ever alive to conviction, though the impression was too soon effaced, appeared shocked at the light her brother threw upon her late conduct, and entreated he would not lessen her in the eyes of Mrs. de Clairville, by mentioning her before the impropriety she had been guilty of.

Her brother readily promised he would be silent on the subject ; happy to find

there was one person in the world to whom she looked up with any degree of respect. After assisting his sister to dismount, Lord Edgell joined Sophia, and detaining her a few minutes, he repeated the conversation that had passed between himself and Lady Caroline, and expressed his pleasure, at finding his first lecture had been received as he could wish ; and the hope he now entertained of yet seeing the thoughtless Caroline, all he could wish.

Sophia had only a minute allowed her to offer her congratulations to his Lordship upon his success, ere her friend returned to seek her, and the dinner bell ringing almost immediately after, obliged them to separate to prepare for attending its summons. Lady Caroline appeared unusually thoughtful the remainder of the day. Captain Rushbrook observed it, and rallied her upon having left her spirits with the groupe of antiques, in the earstern wing of the old castle. The Marquis was uneasy

at remarking his younger daughter's air of abstraction ; and enquired of Lady Lucretia, if she could in any way account for it ; but she professed herself as ignorant of the cause as himself, but determined upon questioning her sister, the first moment they were alone.

The sisters were warmly attached to each other, notwithstanding the striking contrast in their characters. Lady Lucretia resembled her mother, not more in person than in disposition ; which for sweetness and gentleness could not be rivaled.

Lady Caroline's heart and temper were equally warm, she loved her sister with almost an enthusiastic affection, and would have sacrificed any thing to give her pleasure, but her love of independence, as she called it, was so great that when Lady Lucretia, gently remonstrated with her, as was sometimes the case, on her carelessness of the world's opinion, she would answer her,

with either laughing at her talents for an orator, or by running away from the lecturer.

Her father had indulged her in all her wild pranks. Sometimes he was afraid she went too far, and would call her to order but with little effect. Her brother had certainly more influence with her than any one else. She often said, "Seymore possesses more sense than a Longueville ever did yet," and to him she accustomed herself to look up, as to a noble representative of her family, who would be an honor to the name he bore.

Lady Caroline often wished Sophia had seen her brother, before she had known Lord d'Arcy, and unconscious of her engagement to the latter, she yet hoped Lord Edgell's very superior character, his elegant manners and his fine person, might make an impression as deep as that she was persuaded Lord d'Arcy had done. Lady Lncretia became acquainted in the

course of the day, with the occasion of her sister's unusual thoughtfulness : and had the pleasure of perceiving this little lecture from her brother, had been productive of more effect, than she could have believed possible. She hastened to relieve her father's apprehensions on her sister's account, who, smiling at his son's having greater influence with his youngest daughter than himself, and satisfied at finding her meditative mood, was occasioned merely from what had passed between her brother and herself in the morning. The Marquis retired to rest, happy in the conviction of of his children's attachment for each other and in praying for its continuance.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.











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